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TITLE OF THESIS: FEMALE ARTISTS AS CHARACTERS AND CREATORS: THE  
DUAL CONCERN WITH FEMININE ROLE AND FEMININE FICTION  
IN THE WORK OF MAY SINCLAIR, DOROTHY RICHARDSON, AND  
VIRGINIA WOOLF

DEGREE FOR WHICH THESIS WAS PRESENTED: DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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FEMALE ARTISTS AS CHARACTERS AND CREATORS:  
THE DUAL CONCERN WITH FEMININE ROLE AND FEMININE FICTION  
IN THE WORK OF MAY SINCLAIR, DOROTHY RICHARDSON, AND VIRGINIA WOOLF

by

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DIANE FILBY GILLESPIE

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING, 1974

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THESIS  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
OF MASTER OF EDUCATION  
BY  
JAMES W. GILBERT

3

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1974



THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Female Artists as Characters and Creators: The Dual Concern with Feminine Role and Feminine Fiction in the Work of May Sinclair, Dorothy Richardson, and Virginia Woolf" submitted by Diane Filby Gillespie in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.





## The Prologue

To sing of Wars, of Captains, and of Kings,  
Of Cities founded, Common-wealths begun,  
For my mean pen are too superiour things:  
Or how they all or each their dates have run,  
Let Poets and Historians set these forth,  
My obscure Lines shall not so dim their worth.

But when my wondring eyes and envious heart  
Great Bartas' sugar'd lines do but read o're,  
Fool I do grudge the Muses did not part  
'Twixt him and me that overfluent store;  
A Bartas can do what a Bartas will,  
But simple I according to my skill.

From school-boyes' tongues no rhet'rick we expect,  
Nor yet a sweet Consort from broken strings,  
Nor perfect beauty where's a main defect:  
My foolish, broken, blemish'd Muse so sings  
And this to mend, alas, no Art is able,  
'Cause nature made it so irreparable.

Nor can I, like that fluent sweet tongu'd Greek  
Who lisp'd at first, in future times speak plain;  
By Art he gladly found what he did seek--  
A full requital of his striving pain.  
Art can do much, but this maxime's most sure:  
A weak or wounded brain admits no cure.

I am obnoxious to each carping tongue  
Who says my hand a needle better fits,  
A Poet's pen all scorn I should thus wrong,  
For such despite they cast on Female wits:  
If what I do prove well, it won't advance,  
They'll say it's stoln, or else it was by chance.

But sure the Antique Greeks were far more mild,  
Else of our Sexe why feigned they those Nine,  
And Poesy made Calliope's own Child?  
So 'mongst the rest they placed the Arts Divine.  
But this weak knot they will full soon untie--  
The Greeks did nought but play the fools and lye.

To sing of Nature, of Justice, and of Kings,  
Of Cities founded, Common-wealths begun,  
For my mean pen are too important things;  
Or how they all or each their dates have run,  
Let Poets and Historians set these forth,  
My obscure lines shall not so dim their worth.

But when my words: eyes and anxious heart  
Great Baines' suggest I lines do not read a part  
Till I do struggle the Muse did not part  
'Twill him and me that overliant error;  
A Baines can do what a Baines will,  
But simple I according to my skill.

From school-boys' tongues no words I borrow  
Nor yet a sweet Consort from broken strings,  
Not perfect beauty where: a main defect;  
My foolish, broken, blundering Muse no stage  
And this to mend, alas, no Art is able,  
'Cause nature made us so incapable.

Not can I, like that fluent sweet tongue, I know  
Who liq'd at first, to leave them speak plain;  
By Art he gladly found what he did see--  
A full regulated in his striving pain.  
Art can do such, but this nature's most error;  
A weak or wounded brain admits no cure.

I am obstinate to each capricious tongue  
Who save my hand a needle better fits,  
A Poet's pen all acorn I should thus wrong,  
For such despite they cast on female wit;  
If what I do prove well, it won't advance;  
They'll say it's stolen, or else it was my chance.

But sure the Ancient Greeks were far more wild,  
Else of our Sex why feigned they those Mirth,  
And Poets made  
's own Child?

So 'mongst the rest  
This weak heart  
did

Let Greeks be Greeks, and women what they are,  
Men have precedency and still excell.  
It is but vain unjustly to wage warre,  
Men can do best, and women know it well.  
Preheminence in all and each is yours--  
Yet grant some small acknowledgement of ours.

And oh ye high flown quills that soar the Skies,  
And ever with your prey still catch your praise,  
If e're you daigne these lowly lines your eyes,  
Give Thyme or Parsley wreath, I ask no bayes.  
This mean and unrefined ore of mine  
Will make your glistring gold but more to shine.

Anne Bradstreet (c. 1612-1672)





## ABSTRACT

The female artist recurs as a character and as a topic of discussion in the works of nineteenth and early twentieth-century western writers. The dominant view is that she is biologically determined and incapable of significant artistic production. The opposing view that she is a product of inhibiting social circumstances characterizes a vocal minority. To May Sinclair, Dorothy Richardson, and Virginia Woolf, the female artist is an as yet indeterminate creature who faces special problems as a woman because she is an artist and special problems as an artist because she is a woman. The dissatisfaction of these three writers with definitions of "woman" and of "artist" that are mutually exclusive is related closely to their interest in both the suffrage movement and experimentation in various art media. Woolf's essays and novels are central to a discussion of the female artist in conflict with inhibiting social circumstances. In a consideration of the female artist's aesthetics, however, Richardson's work is central. Sinclair, who treats both issues, provides, in addition, insight into the volatile aesthetic milieu of the early twentieth century and an understanding of the metaphysical position behind the female artist's aesthetics. Fundamental to the work of all three women is a respect for the individual consciousness and its ability to perceive permanence as well as change. Such respect, all three women insist, is lacking both in western society and in western art.





Attributing this lack to the predominance of masculine values, they struggle themselves and create female artist characters who struggle to achieve an inclusive perspective and to find artistic forms appropriate for its expression.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## CONTENTS

	Page
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. WOMAN OR ARTIST: DILEMMA AND REDEFINITION . . . . .	16
A. Biology or Environment: Two Views of the Female Artist . . . . .	16
B. Virginia Woolf: Suffragette or Artist . . . . .	52
C. Dorothy Richardson: Victim or Victor . . . . .	62
D. May Sinclair: The New Normality . . . . .	75
E. "Can't Paint, Can't Write": Virginia Woolf's Lily Briscoe and Orlando . . . . .	93
<u>To the Lighthouse</u> . . . . .	96
<u>Orlando</u> . . . . .	118
F. Life with an "Alien Consciousness": Dorothy Richardson's Miriam on Marriage. . . . .	133
G. From Either-Or to Both-And: May Sinclair's Female Artist-Characters . . . . .	151
III. MASCULINE OR FEMININE REALISM: THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FEMININE AESTHETICS AND METAPHYSICS . . . . .	183
A. Presentation, Not Representation: May Sinclair and the Avant-Garde . . . . .	183
B. "Life in Its Own Right at First Hand": Dorothy Richardson, Miriam Henderson, and the Novel . . . .	193
"Becoming Versus Being" . . . . .	196
Man's Art, Woman's Art, and Woman's Artifice . . . .	209
Talent and Genius . . . . .	220
The Destructiveness of Coercion: Point of View and Related Aspects of Feminine Realism . . . . .	227





	Page
"Shapeless Shapeliness": Story and Structure in Feminine Realism . . . . .	241
Things Versus People: Setting in Feminine Realism .	247
Trial and Error: Miriam's Struggle to Present Reality . . . . .	251
C. "Stream of Consciousness": May Sinclair and Dorothy Richardson . . . . .	264
D. The Metaphysics Behind a Feminine Aesthetics: May Sinclair and the New Idealism . . . . .	288
E. Theory and Practice: Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson . . . . .	307
F. The Creative Struggle in a Destructive Environment: Virginia Woolf's Lily Briscoe, Orlando, and Miss LaTrobe . . . . .	321
<u>To the Lighthouse</u> . . . . .	327
<u>Orlando</u> . . . . .	331
<u>Between the Acts</u> . . . . .	339
IV. CONCLUSION . . . . .	354
NOTES . . . . .	361
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	390
I. Primary Sources . . . . .	390
II. Secondary Sources . . . . .	395
APPENDICES . . . . .	409
I. Female Artist-Characters in Literature Written by Men . . . . .	413
II. Female Artist-Characters in Literature Written by Women . . . . .	420



## I. INTRODUCTION

"True poets and true women have the native sense of the divineness of what the world deems gross material substance."

George Meredith, Diana of the Crossways (1885)

"Over and over again--as Being and Becoming, as Eternity and Time, as Transcendence and Immanence, Reality and Appearance, the One and the Many--these two dominant ideas, demands, imperious instincts of man's self will reappear; the warp and woof of his completed universe . . . . Both of these, taken alone, are declared by the mystics to be incomplete. They conceive that Absolute Being who is the goal of their quest as manifesting himself in a World of Becoming. . . ."

Evelyn Underhill, Mysticism (1910)

"In the seventeenth century a dissociation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered."

T.S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets" (1921)

Female artists in the essays and fiction of May Sinclair, Dorothy Richardson, and Virginia Woolf have two major problems. In the first place, the demands of their creativity often seem incompatible with the demands of the biologically and socially prescribed roles of wife and mother. In the second, many of them are conscious of the need for different, more subtle and flexible art forms in which to embody what one might call a feminine metaphysics. Their art often represents an attempt to amalgamate the individualism of the Romantic period and the metaphysical idealism it suggests with the close attention to the world around them characteristic of empirical science, Naturalism in literature, and the metaphysical realism that often is its counterpart. This desire of serious artists for appropriate forms seems incompatible both with traditional negative attitudes toward women artists and with art forms developed by men to express masculine values. The two problems are related. Social emancipation during



the period of the English Women's Suffrage Movement and aesthetic emancipation during a volatile period of experimentation in many art media, including the novel, meet in the female artist-characters of these three writers.

In both cases emancipation depends upon a redefinition of terms. Sinclair, Richardson, and Woolf, each in her own way, challenge the definition of woman as a biological mechanism suited only for the reproduction of the race as well as the related definition of woman's social role as one of self-abnegation. All three, moreover, in some way challenge romantic definitions of the artist-as-hero that exclude women. They also challenge definitions of art as representative either of abstract ideals or of the external world of facts and events; both definitions exclude women's respect for the individual and for his consciousness wherein permanence and change coexist. The interest in woman's situation and its implications for the female artist is the culmination of a relatively long tradition in both nonfiction and fiction. The interdependence of social and aesthetic dimensions represents a significant shift in emphasis within that tradition.

An examination of the female artist-characters of these three women in the contexts of the suffrage movement and the aesthetic avant garde constitutes a thorough treatment of neither the work of each nor selected aspects of the modern period. It contributes, however, to an understanding of both. The documentation of certain inconsistencies, confusions, and changes of emphasis in each woman's thinking on various issues as well as the stages by which each developed as an artist interests critics who specialize in individual writers. Such critics usually succeed in communicating the tone of the individual mind





whose manifestations they study. Too often, however, they assume originality in thought or aesthetic practice where little exists. Like epidemiologists in medicine, other critics document the spread or the incidence of ideas, attitudes, and artistic techniques among the writers of a particular period. They avoid the assumption of originality but, in treating large numbers of writers only as illustrations of larger trends, often fail to communicate a sense of the individual minds involved. Such is the advantage and disadvantage, in fact, of the chapter on the female artist in literature which begins Part II of this study.

A work of art is the product of individual and communal elements. The artist contributes a particular temperament and combination of interests and experiences to the social milieu and the aesthetic tradition he shares with others. To suggest this variation and repetition the critic of course can trace influences upon an individual writer. In doing so, however, he tends to subordinate to the writer upon whom he focuses the other thinkers and artists he discusses by treating them briefly as direct or indirect causes of various carefully-documented effects. Instead of suggesting a balance between variation and repetition, he inevitably emphasizes the individual writer's variations. Whether he focuses on one writer, then, or on many as the representatives of a particular tendency, the critic is likely to distort the artist's relation to his milieu. Such studies can be extremely useful, but only if the reader recognizes their limitations as well as their strengths.

One way to combine the advantages of the two approaches mentioned above is to consider in some detail the works of a manageably small



number of writers who, while possibly familiar with each others' work, nevertheless develop with relative independence within a common social and aesthetic milieu. Sinclair, Richardson, and Woolf lend themselves well to such treatment. Their works appear in England during roughly the same period; on occasion they write about each other; reviewers frequently deal with two of them together. All three are interested in the suffrage movement, experimentation in the arts, and the female artist's relationship to either or both. They agree on some essential points; nevertheless, because of varying temperaments and backgrounds, they emphasize different aspects of the ongoing discussions in larger segments of the society around them. Their works taken together constitute a microcosm of the interests of British middle-class society in the early decades of the century.

Even in a comparative discussion, however, the work of each woman poses special problems that require mention. A wide variation exists in their reputations. At various points in this study, reasons emerge for this disparity. The procedural problem it creates is of interest here. With the possible exception of one or two, Sinclair's twenty-four novels, over thirty short stories, two books of philosophy, and numerous essays published between the 1890's and the early 1930's are relatively unknown even among writers on the modern period in British literature. Admittedly, her work is uneven in quality. Works that merit some attention in a variety of contexts, however, coexist with those justifiably ignored. Similarly, critics, even some who write about it, rarely read Richardson's Pilgrimage in its entirety and generally ignore her stories, poems, and essays. The prevailing assumption that her work is more interesting historically than in its own right has some validity but ought not be accepted out of hand. At



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present, however, references to the numerous works and multitudinous characters of both Sinclair and Richardson often necessitate brief orienting and summarizing statements. The problem in the case of Woolf's work, which at least is well-known for a number of reasons not all of which have to do with high quality, is the voluminous and ever-proliferating critical commentary. Anyone who considers making additional observations should at least attempt to place his remarks in the context of what already has been said.

A second problem, characteristic of the Künstlerroman in general, is the varying amount of autobiographical content. Such elements appear in the characterizations of certain female artists created by all three women and suggest correspondences with remarks each makes elsewhere. In Richardson's case, however, autobiographical content, re-defined, actually becomes part of her aesthetics. Discussions of her work especially benefit from a close counterpointing of statements made by creator and character. Although all three women perceive more than their most autobiographical characters perceive, in Pilgrimage the distance between creator and character is most difficult to detect.

Richardson's interest, and to a lesser extent, Sinclair's, in re-evaluating the notion of autobiographical content suggests a third problem, that of terminology. It exists on two levels. All three women, conscious of the ways in which traditions in language govern thoughts and behavior, insist upon redefinitions or reassessments of the connotations associated with numerous words. Not only must one clarify and then remember the particular reassessments each woman makes, but one also must re-examine in this context a number of loosely-used critical terms, like "realism" and "stream of consciousness."



A final problem emerges because each woman makes a different contribution to the picture of the early twentieth-century English female artist that is the product of this study. An order of discussion determined by the nature of their contributions is more illuminating than are separate discussions of all relevant works by each author or chronological arrangements of any kind. In a consideration of the female artist's conflict with a hostile social environment, Woolf's work, although much of it was published later than that of Sinclair or Richardson, is the best starting-point. Her environmental emphasis is closest to that of the major feminists preceding and succeeding her whereas the emphases of the other two women represent departures and qualifications. Moreover, Woolf's essays on this subject are the most numerous, extensive, and well-known. The relationship between the essays and the situations of two of her major female artist-characters is close. The characters of Richardson and Sinclair represent interesting variations.

In a consideration of the female artist's aesthetics, however, Richardson's work, not Woolf's, is central, both because of the thoroughgoing transformation of theory into practice in Pilgrimage and because the reviews the other two women wrote of her work provide interesting introductions to their particular aesthetic variations. The emphasis of this study is less on the different ways in which each transforms a similar theory into practice than on the aesthetic statements each makes in her essays and reflects in her female artist-characters. Both Woolf and Richardson present their women artists in the midst of a dual struggle to define and to express honestly their individual definitions of reality. Sinclair's female artist-characters either struggle to find the social conditions suitable for any work





at all or struggle to define reality. Her major contributions to the examination of the female artist's aesthetics are a vivid picture of the avant garde artists of her day plus a systematic statement in her books of philosophy of the metaphysics behind the aesthetics to which she and Richardson and, to a lesser extent Woolf, subscribe.

Sinclair, Richardson, and Woolf were born a decade apart, in 1863, 1873, and 1882 respectively, during the period when women's dissatisfaction with the role assigned them in English society actually coalesced into a movement. The main assumption behind the movement was that women are what their circumstances have made them, not what they inevitably must be. Numerous bills designed to improve those circumstances appeared during the latter half of the century including resolutions in favor of women's suffrage. Bills dealing with women's personal freedom and property in marriage as well as the custody of children in divorce represented attempts to better their legal position. Attempts to enter educational institutions previously closed to them and to establish schools for themselves evidenced growing concern with the haphazard way women had been educated and increasing interest in entering professions hitherto dominated by men. Attempts to alleviate the distress of dressmakers, governesses, and women factory and mine workers, underway already in the early nineteenth century, were extended to include attempts to aid prostitutes victimized by the double standard of sexual morality.

Around the turn of the century, women's activities on their own behalf reached militant proportions. The movement split into two factions. One of these was the National Union, a democratically and efficiently-governed group of constitutional societies that claimed to work peacefully for human progress in general. The other was the





Women's Social and Political Union, militant groups tenuously united by loyalty to a few all-powerful and charismatic leaders. The tone of defiance and the emphasis on sensational, dramatic action created considerable antagonism. National Union processions and meetings as well as militant activities and government reprisals reached their peak during the few years preceding World War I. Its outbreak in 1914 absorbed these energies as women became nurses, took over men's jobs, and won general acclaim for their usefulness and courage. Partly as a result of their war work, women in England were enfranchised in 1918.<sup>1</sup>

The artistic careers of Sinclair, Richardson, and Woolf coincide in important respects with the peak years of suffrage activity, the War, the passage of the suffrage bill, and the continued examination of women's role in society that was its aftermath. Sinclair begins her career as a novelist during the rise of the militant suffrage movement. Her major essays on the subject, however, do not appear until 1912, when the activities of the movement are at their height. Her major fictional attempt to deal with the militant aspects of the movement, The Tree of Heaven, appears five years later. When in 1915 Richardson and Woolf begin their careers as publishing novelists, Sinclair almost has reached the last decade of hers. Nevertheless, considerable overlap exists in their interest in the suffrage movement since both Richardson and Woolf write novels dealing with their earlier formative years. Richardson's interest in redefining women's role in society is evident in her essays. Moreover, she reflects that interest in many sections of Pilgrimage, which traces the development of Miriam Henderson from about 1890 to 1911-12. Similarly, both of Woolf's first two novels, The Voyage Out (1915) and Night and Day (1919) depict the



preceding years and evidence much concern with women's education, the women's movement, and women's situation in general. Her major portrait of a suffragist appears in the second novel. These interests continue to emerge in the later novels, although in a less-polemical fashion. She confines the overt polemicism to short essays and to two longer discourses on the subject, A Room of One's Own (1929) and Three Guineas (1938).

Throughout the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth, novelists reflect much of the discussion surrounding women's situation. The strengths and weaknesses of the "new woman" are a concern not only of female novelists like Austen, Mrs. Gaskell, the Brontës, and George Eliot, but also of male novelists like Hardy, Gissing, Meredith, Moore, Shaw, Wells, Forster, and Lawrence.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Sinclair, Richardson, and Woolf criticize as well as defend the suffrage movement and the kinds of women it produces. Their own interest in the movement conflicts in various ways with their careers as artists and with their definition of women's values. All three, therefore, look for ways to improve women's situation not in the submergence of the individual consciousness in angry collective attacks upon a male-dominated social system, but in the awakening of individual consciousnesses through art. They do not agree on the source of woman's respect for the individual consciousness and its ability to perceive permanence as well as change but, like a number of their predecessors and contemporaries, they advocate the inclusion of women's values in the larger society. They may abhor the restrictions placed upon women; nevertheless, they would not have women imitate men. The wholeness that these women find missing in their male-dominated society is





reflected in Woolf's work by titles like Granite and Rainbow and Night and Day as well as by paired characters like Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay in To the Lighthouse. It is reflected in Richardson's work by continual reference to the opposing states of becoming and being and by the equally constant references to realism and idealism in Sinclair's.

Their own varying terminology suggests that their demand for a society that includes women's values is, at least in part, the demand for wholeness and balance that is a major theme in modern thought and that is discussed in a variety of ways. T. S. Eliot in "The Metaphysical Poets" (1921), for example, regrets a split in the modern world between thought and feeling. However unjust his condemnation of Milton and Dryden, Eliot coins a phrase, "the dissociation of sensibility," that reverberates widely. It does so because it seems to define the modern malady of which modern literature is symptomatic, and the corresponding desire to reunite opposing but not necessarily irreconcilable forces. The alliance of the Wilcoxes and the Schlegels in E. M. Forster's Howard's End (1921), the challenges to the Forsyte mentality in Galsworthy's saga (1906-1921), the friendship between Gerald Crich and Birkin in Lawrence's Women in Love (1920), and the confrontation between Bloom and Stephen in Joyce's Ulysses (1922) are a few of numerous manifestations of this desire, often frustrated, to unite thought and feeling, material and spiritual, time and eternity, masculine and feminine.

The attitudes of Sinclair, Richardson, and Woolf toward the female artist are related directly to their views of women's situation in general. They object to the social restrictions upon women mainly because they prevent the expression and incorporation of women's values



into the world beyond the home. Art is one important channel for such expression. They agree that a hostile social environment limits the female artist's productivity, but they disagree about the extent to which it can touch her potential. They agree that a woman's energies and commitments have other objects than husband and children. Consequently, all three explore the female artist's difficulty in reconciling her desire for intimate human relationships and the self-sacrificing feminine role with which that desire usually encumbers her, with her desire to create works of art. On this subject they have little to add to the discussions and characterizations of their predecessors. They differ, however, in that they examine the conflict not only in the context of the female artist's public behavior but also in the context of her inner life where unarticulated responses provide another dimension to what she says and does.

Closely related to this wish to introduce women's values into the larger society is the wish of Sinclair, but primarily of Richardson and Woolf, to introduce them into art. If art is to be a vehicle of expression for women's values, then it must be distinguishable from the art men produce. The reflection of this view in their treatment of the female artist represents their major contribution to the tradition established by their predecessors. The female artist's evolving aesthetics and her struggle to create works of art become important in the novel when novelists begin to define reality as the inner life of the mind rather than the external world of objects and events. Not only do these three women often present the female artist from within but, to varying degrees, they show her developing the aesthetics that determines the way she is presented. Woolf and Richardson agree that female artists must find art forms appropriate to





the expression of their individual inner lives and values. They do not agree, however, upon the source of whatever coherence such works of art may have. Of the three women, only Richardson finds her order in the inner life of the individual and redefines art so that it does no more than reflect that order.

If the demand that women's values be included in the larger society can be seen in a broader context, so can the demand that they be included in art. Again Sinclair, Richardson, and Woolf discuss in terms of masculine and feminine, aesthetic tendencies that they and others discuss in different terms on alternate occasions. All three, with different degrees of vehemence, attack one group of their predecessors and contemporaries in the novel; all three identify with aspects of the work of other writers, men as well as women, who find prevailing novel forms inadequate to express what they define as real. A dichotomy emerges between writers who emphasize the object perceived and those who emphasize the perceiver and, among the latter, between those who explain what occurs in a character's mind and those who, in various ways, dramatize it. The names of the novelists involved, French, Russian, and American as well as English, are familiar. The critical descriptions of this phase in the novel's development are abundant. More illuminating than another list of names or another general discussion is the multiple perspective one gains from a comparison of Sinclair's, Richardson's, and Woolf's views on the subject. Still more interesting is an examination of the related views of some of their female artist-characters.

The labels attached to the tendency in the novel of which these three women are a part come from several sources, including other genres and art media. Critics call certain of their novels, with





different degrees of accuracy, "imagistic" or "impressionistic."<sup>3</sup>

It is true that the work of all three women suggests the modern breakdown of rigid genre and medium distinctions. All three present female artist-characters who are not novelists but whose views of art are applicable to the novel. Experimenting themselves with alternate vehicles of artistic expression, all three are aware of new tendencies especially in poetry and in the visual arts. The reaction against traditional novel forms in which they share is part of a larger climate of experimentation. Difficulties exist in drawing parallels between genres and even more so between media. Transferring terms from one to another can be particularly misleading. Nevertheless, one justifiably can ignore the advantages and limitations peculiar to each genre and medium and speak of the similar view of reality suggested by parallel shifts in content and form within a number of artistic traditions.

The primary justification for doing so within the context of this study is Sinclair's, Richardson's, and Woolf's tendency to do so themselves. Some of Richardson's views on the cinema are related closely to her views on the novel as reflected in those of her female artist-character, Miriam, and will be considered in that light. Woolf's familiarity through Roger Fry with developments in French painting as well as characteristics of her own art that seem to parallel those developments are noted by a number of critics, especially in relation to To the Lighthouse.<sup>4</sup> More useful as an introduction to the volatile aesthetic climate in which these three women worked are Sinclair's essays on Imagist poetry and her presentation in fiction of characters who are Imagists and Vorticists.

These two closely-related movements dominated the arts in England



between 1910 and 1919. Imagism challenged poetic tradition; Vorticism, at least as Ezra Pound and some of the others saw it, extended similar aesthetic principles to all of the arts. The year that the first section of Pilgrimage and The Voyage Out appeared was also the year when The Egoist devoted an entire issue to Imagism. Sinclair contributed an essay. In 1914 and 1915, too, Blast, a publication which was in part a manifesto of the Vorticists, was being published. Disagreements with the views of Marinetti, the Italian Futurist who lectured frequently in London between 1912 and 1914, as well as with certain tendencies in French painting prompted the magazine, which included pieces by Pound, Wyndham Lewis, Rebecca West, Ford Madox Hueffer, Gaudier-Brzeska, Eliot, and others. Scornful of sentimentality and of everything cumberously Victorian, both the Imagists and the Vorticists stressed a clear, precise, concrete, direct presentation of the individual artist's perceptions. The War years marked the end of Imagism and Vorticism as movements, although not as important tendencies in the arts. The twenties served to intensify some characteristics of those movements, like the tendency to question, reject, or radically redefine ideological systems and literary techniques of the past as well as to affirm and to discover new ways to express as directly as possible the immediate perceptions of the individual artist.<sup>5</sup>

In 1917 Eliot's Prufrock and Other Observations appeared, was attacked by critics, and defended by Pound and Sinclair. In that year, too, Sinclair presented in The Tree of Heaven not only her fictional portrait of the militant suffragettes but also of the avant-garde artists of the previous several years. In her mind the two challenges to tradition obviously are related. Not surprisingly, the two groups





of challengers, both of whom aroused public indignation, felt some sympathy with each other. The violent acts of the suffragettes, which included the hacking of paintings, coincided with more and more frequent displays of avant-garde art. The Vorticists commend the militant suffrage movement for its vitality and bravery. They ask, however, that the suffragettes use discrimination in their acts of violence and are not above poking subtle fun at them:

In Destruction, as in other things,  
 Stick to what you understand.  
 We make you a present of our votes.  
 Only leave works of art alone.  
 You might some day destroy a  
 Good Picture by Accident....  
 We admire your energy.  
 You and Artists are the only things (you don't mind being called  
     things?) Left in England  
 With a little Life in them.<sup>6</sup>

Sinclair, Richardson, and Woolf as well as many of the female artist-characters they create combine the destructive vitality of the suffragettes with the destructive and constructive efforts of the avant-garde artists. Not merely women or artists, they are women artists. They destroy art not literally but indirectly, by replacing traditional forms with forms more suitable to their definitions of reality.

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## II. WOMAN OR ARTIST: DILEMMA AND REDEFINITION

### A. Biology or Environment: Two Views of the Female Artist

"'I couldn't love a woman whose cheek is kissed in public by an actor, a woman addressed as 'darling' in the wings, who cheapens herself in front of the groundlings and smiles on them, who dances with lifted skirts and puts on male attire in order to display what I want to be the only man to see. Or, if I loved such a woman, she would give up the theatre, and my love would purify her.'"

Daniel d'Arthez in Balzac's Lost Illusions (1837-43)

"'We don't ask what a woman does--we ask whom she belongs to.'"

Maggie Tulliver in George Eliot's The Mill on the Floss (1860)

A consideration of the artist-character in literature has more dimensions than have been studied. The dimension of sex differences, as biologically and socially defined, is one of them. Male writers create female as well as male artist-characters; female writers create male as well as female artist-characters. Each sex, one suspects, to some extent misrepresents the artist-characters of the opposite sex, often by seeing them only in relation to major characters who are likely to be of their own sex. Misrepresentation, however, also exists in the form of stereotypes, the nature of which is governed by the individual writer's position on the issue of sex differences as discussed in his or her country and historical period. Some stereotypes are more pervasive and debilitating than others. Writers show that all artists have difficulties to overcome. The male artist-character, however, whether created by a man or a woman writer, does not encounter the assumption that his physiological functions and the social role that they supposedly determine render him incapable of significant artistic production. The female artist-character either is presented

A. History of Evolution: Two Views of the Female Artist

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Barthelme's Father in Balthus's *Lost Illusions* (1937-42)

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Maggie Tulliver in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860)

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condescendingly according to that assumption or has to challenge it in some way. One need not encounter very many of the surprisingly large number of such characters to observe the pattern.<sup>1</sup>

Yet to most of the English and American literary critics who have focused on the artist-character, artist means male artist. When they consider issues such as the artist's apprenticeship, his increasing estrangement from the values of a pragmatic, industrial society, and the effect upon his work of intimate relationships with other people, they occasionally refer to a female artist-character as an example; when her struggle parallels the male artist's, it is worthy of note, but it constitutes nothing distinctive in itself.<sup>2</sup> Governed like the novelist by their society's definition of sex differences, critics are likely to perpetuate rather than to challenge the stereotypes encountered in the works they discuss. Critical balance is restored to some extent by growing numbers of studies, done mostly by women and varying widely in quality, on the image of women in literature as well as on female writers and the attitudes toward woman's situation reflected in both their lives and fiction. Occasionally in these studies the female artist-character receives some attention.<sup>3</sup> Yet even these critics assume, often correctly, that such a character is more important in a particular novel as a woman than as an artist, without recognizing that this very fact is part of a pattern worth defining in more detail.

Characterizations and discussions of female artists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries indicate agreement on the inferiority of women's productivity and achievement in the arts, with the exceptions of the theatre and possibly the novel. Disagreement exists, however, about the reasons for the disparity and about the extent to which it is





necessary. Explanations range upon a continuum between two poles. The dominant view is that women are inherently inferior in artistic creativity because nature designates them to bear children, an all-consuming function that necessitates neither intellect nor more exalted, impersonal varieties of emotion. Related is the assertion that, just as male geniuses have surmounted obstacles, so women, if they had any real ability, would have achieved in spite of debilitating circumstances. The challenging explanation is that women are the victims of unnecessarily rigid social definitions and values relegating them almost entirely to biological and emotional functions and inculcating from an early age insurmountable feelings of inferiority in the face of other kinds of activities. Advocates of this position insist that the artistic potential of the two sexes cannot be evaluated or compared until both are given equal encouragement, training, and opportunities to develop whatever abilities they might possess. Which position a writer favors depends to some extent but not entirely upon his or her sex.

Byron's much-quoted observation that love constitutes part of a man's life but all of a woman's is affirmed by the Darwinian biologists of the Victorian period as well as by major psychologists. Women, they say, create babies and harmonious homes, not art. Possessing intuition, not intellect, they can deal with individuals and their relationships as well as with concrete everyday experiences, but not with aggregates, institutions, and abstract systems of thought. Women are by nature dependent, not independent, passive, not active, altruistic, not egoistic.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, as Graf in George Eliot's "Armgarth" (1871), Dick Helder in Kipling's The Light That Failed (1891), and numerous other men in literature think, they ought to be more willing than men to give up careers for love.

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To refuse to do so is absurd since they cannot be successful anyway. Because a woman's biological characteristics supposedly arrest her intellectual development at a certain point, she cannot attain the androgeneity necessary for great art. Men, on the other hand, retain the less-valued emotional qualities and go beyond them. They develop the intellectual attributes needed to control the emotions and to transform mere self-expression into art. When George Henry Lewes points out that male artists have feminine traits as well as masculine, he does not say that women artists have masculine traits as well as feminine. Women perform admirably only in media, like the novel, where the major theme, love, coincides with their major concern. Almost a century later, John Crowe Ransom still maintains that the best man is an "intellectualized woman" who keeps some feminine qualities but adds an intellectual dimension.<sup>5</sup>

In literature written by men female artists usually are minor characters, like the actresses in Goethe's Wilhelm Meister (1795-6), or, like the female artists in Thackeray's The Newcomes (1853-5), they merely are mentioned as part of the major male character's social milieu. The attention paid these women is so minimal that, even if they do exist in the novel primarily in their capacity as artists, their situations and abilities are not treated in any detail. Even when a woman artist is a central character or one of two or more equally-important characters in literature written by men, the fact that she is an artist is less likely to be important than it is in literature written by women. The artist's developing aesthetics, struggle to create, and finished works of art generally seem difficult for novelists to portray. When the







artist-character is a woman, however, novelists either do not make the attempt or they describe her exertions in ways that devalue their significance as art. Even Meredith, with his outspoken admiration for women who challenge the traditional female role, is not particularly interested in their art. His Emilia, for example, in Emilia in England (1864) and especially in Vittoria (1866), is more important as an Italian patriot than as a singer; her artistic career is most significant for the way it enables her to travel widely, meet a variety of people, and involve herself in various intrigues. George Sand, whose heroine in Consuelo (1844) has similar adventures, still pays considerable attention to her artistic training and theories.

Nineteenth and early-twentieth century essayists, novelists, and their characters usually voice no objection to women pursuing various forms of art on an amateur level. So long as such pursuits do not interfere with household duties or elevate wives above their husbands, women may use the arts to improve their own characters as well as the general quality of family life. Sir Willoughby in Meredith's The Egoist (1879), for example, advises Laetitia Dale, a poet, not to waste herself on the public but to save her abilities for the enjoyment of her husband and children. Women, in novels and out, are just as prone to make such recommendations as are men. Mrs. Ellis in The Daughters of England (1842), for example, makes them and adds that to be poetical, to love and represent beauty, fitness, and order, is a greater source of profit and power for a woman than to fill books with poetry.<sup>6</sup> Minor characters like Lady Engleton in Mona Caird's The Daughters of Danaus (1894), Madame Ratignolle in Kate Chopin's "The Awakening" (1895), and

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numerous mothers of potential female artists in literature represent the pervasiveness of this view and suggest the formidable obstacle it presents.

Only a small step is necessary from the view of woman as an embodiment of aesthetic principles to the traditional representation of the female artist as the facilitator, or, more frequently, the inspirer of the male artist.<sup>7</sup> E.T.A. Hoffmann's early nineteenth-century stories are the best examples in literature of the female artist in a wholly constructive inspirational role. More complex variants appear elsewhere, in, for example, Hans Christian Andersen's The Improvisatore (1832) and Melville's Pierre (1852). The predecessors of the female artist in her positive inspirational role are the nine Muses, goddesses known for their lovely voices, who preside over various kinds of poetry, art, and science as well as inspire men to great efforts in these fields. Her parallels among nonartist-characters are all the devout and devoted, obedient and chaste angels peopling the houses of eighteenth and nineteenth century British and American popular literature. The inspiring female artist is less an individual and even less an artist than an abstract ideal, a representative of the innocence, beauty, or divine perfection to which the artist aspires. Some of the pessimism about women's artistic potential therefore is suspended.

Nevertheless, even the inspiring female artist usually is an actress, singer, musician, or dancer rather than a writer, painter, or composer. If the female artist moves beyond amateur standing, she most frequently becomes a performer rather than a creator. The distinction between performing and creative media is not clear-cut. Achievement in the former, however, is thought to depend more upon the personality





and emotions of the performer than upon the form and technique for which intellect is required. A woman who becomes an actress or singer, therefore, emphasizes, enhances, and utilizes rather than denies her femininity. Peter Sherringham in James's The Tragic Muse (1890), for example, thinks that if a woman is unfortunate enough to be attracted to the arts, she had better choose the stage, because it provides an outlet for the kinds of abilities she has and does not require any that she lacks.

The very qualities that supposedly bring women success as public performers, however, also expose them to charges of impropriety and even immorality. A woman presumably does not produce art at all. She produces, instead, an autobiographical extension of her life. Woman's art, George Moore says, simply is "sighing and gossiping" about her "natural affections."<sup>8</sup> Not surprisingly, the operatic performances of his Evelyn Innes in the novel of that name (1898) consist largely of putting moments of her own life on stage. No imagination, invention, or conscious artistry govern what she does. "If Nature gives me a personality worth exhibiting," she thinks, "the art of acting is to get as much of one's personality into the part as possible."<sup>9</sup>

The tendency to characterize woman's art as a spontaneous overflowing of her life was encouraged, of course, by some women artists themselves. Popular women novelists especially, who could not afford to be threatening to men, described themselves as domestic birds, singing to the world the joys and sorrows of life in their little nests, not for money or fame, but because singing is as natural to them as cooking or sewing.<sup>10</sup> This image of the woman artist raises the general question of the relationship between the artist's experience and his art.





Male artists admittedly utilize their experience in their art, but they can invent and analyze as well as reproduce. Women are thought to be wholly dependent upon their experiences. The implication exists in many treatments of the female artist that a dichotomy necessarily exists between life and any art of real significance. True genius supposedly is a gift bestowed from on high, from a realm which, in the Christian tradition, is reached by women indirectly, through men. With the exception of Grillparzer's Sappho (1818), female artist-characters rarely are presented as chosen by the gods and driven by an unquenchable divine fire. Their small flame usually is kindled at the domestic hearth.

If woman's art is autobiography, then it is not respectable. No nice woman displays her person and her emotions in public. Those who do so may be applauded, but they also are suspected and feared. Their foremothers are the Sirens, destructive sea nymphs whose exquisite voices and tempting songs enchanted sailors, then lured them to their deaths. Their parallels in literature are all of the fatal ladies without souls, minds, honor, modesty, or purity who sap the male's energy and frustrate his career. In a number of novels, usually written by men, the major theme is an actress's or a singer's realization that her life is worldly, sensual, and immoral. As a result, she renounces her career. Charles Read's Margaret Woffington (1852), George Moore's Evelyn Innes (1898), and Hall Caine's Glory Quayle (1898) all do so. Conrad Percy's view of the actress and of the female artist in general in Geraldine Jewsbury's The Half-Sisters (1849) typifies the one to which these characters acquiesce. Percy admires women who are charmingly and gracefully helpless, unobtrusively religious, pure, and, above all, modest. The essence of femininity is belonging to one man, looking to him for

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protection, confiding in him alone, and accepting his opinions and decisions. In no way can a woman who is an actress or even a writer meet these standards. According to Percy

"A woman who makes her mind public, or exhibits herself in any way, no matter how it may be dignified by the title of art, seems to me little better than a woman of a nameless class. I am more jealous of the mind than of the body; and, to me, there is something revolting in the notion of a woman who professes to love and belong to you alone, going and printing the secrets of her inmost heart, the most sacred workings of her soul, for the benefit of all who can pay for them. What is the value of a woman whom everyone who chooses may know as much about as you do yourself? The stage is still worse, for that is publishing both mind and body too."<sup>11</sup>

Women in the theatre, Percy charges, tend to be independent, frank, vain, and more aware of the evil in the world than they should be; public not private property, their virtue continually may be speculated about and tried. Moreover, they comply with the demands of audiences whose members want their boredom assuaged, not their minds elevated. Their limited physical strength, lack of concentration, and dislike of hard work, moreover, cause women to struggle to do what men can do much better. In sum, they lose all their value as private property without becoming property-owners themselves, and they sacrifice all feminine charm without being able to attain masculine intelligence.

As Percy's comment makes clear, whenever the assumption that women's art is emotional self-expression prevails, she is subject to charges of immodesty and immorality, whatever her artistic medium. In the case of the female writer, part of the reason for the charge is that the novel, for many decades, was not considered a respectable genre even for men.<sup>12</sup> The insistence of reviewers and critics upon reading women's writing as autobiography combined with the disrepute of the novel in general often required women to preserve their







reputations, if indeed they were not novelists because they already had none to lose, by publishing anonymously or under pseudonyms. A pseudonym seems particularly necessary if the woman writer wants to treat in her fiction problems that women are not supposed to know about or at least to discuss. Miss Collop in James's "The Death of the Lion" (1894), for example, publishes her book, "Obsessions," under the name Guy Walsingham. As a journalist in the story explains, a book with such a title might look a bit indelicate if it were written by a "Miss."

The reasons why a woman pursues art are of major concern in most presentations of female artists in literature. In many cases, multiple motives exist, but when the female artist-character is the creation of a writer who believes that love constitutes all of life for a woman, commitment to art is less likely than financial necessity or vanity to be significant. The attribution of nonaesthetic motives to the female artist is not, of course, unjust. Art is not a major concern among large numbers of women, as, indeed, George Eliot and, later, Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir complain. Neither is art a major concern among a substantial number of male artists, as Gissing's The New Grub Street (1891) suggests. Nevertheless, the numbers of male artist-characters in fiction who are not committed to art is balanced if not outweighed by male artist-characters who are both committed and able. Men, whatever some of them actually produce, presumably have the potential for great artistic achievement while women, because of what some of them produce, presumably have not.

Many female artists in fiction pursue their art primarily in order to support themselves or others. In many cases they see art as a trade and learn it to please the public. The lack of conflict between its



standards and their own suggests that they are incapable of anything other than popular work. The female novelists in James's short stories are the best of many examples. Jane Highmore in "The Next Time" (1895) thinks she experiences a conflict in standards, but cannot produce a serious work of art even when she tries. Ralph Limbert, on the other hand, whose novels are admired only by a small group of reputable critics, cannot produce a popular novel. Similarly, Greville Fane in "Greville Fane" (1893) trains her son to be a novelist by providing him with the broad range of experiences that she, as a woman, has been denied. The irony is that even when she has unusual experiences, she writes in the same hackneyed manner as before.

A few male writers do present female artist-characters who experience a genuine conflict between what they must do to earn money and their aesthetic standards. Meredith's Diana in Diana of the Crossways (1885), for example, feels that her artistic integrity often is compromised by her pressing financial needs. Nothing in the novel indicates that her assessment of her potential is in error. In Ford Madox Ford's Some Do Not . . . (1924) and A Man Could Stand Up (1926), Valentine Wannon defines her mother's situation in a similar way. Even Francie Forsyte in Galsworthy's The Man of Property (1906) might have composed better pieces of music had she not been influenced by the Forsyte tendency to evaluate works of art according to the prices they bring. The family approves of her popular songs but disapproves of her attempt to write a violin sonata because it likely will not sell.

The prevailing condescension or contempt accorded the female artist earning her living by her art sometimes is an extension of the attitude toward single women in general. Such women usually have no men to support

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them and supposedly are prevented from fulfilling themselves in the only possible way, as self-sacrificing wives and mothers. The physical unattractiveness that has prevented their finding husbands or the fussiness, ill-temper, and tendency to meddle thought to result from frustrated, wasted lives make them subject to pity or ridicule. The reaction of writers as well as other characters in literature to spinsters and their occupations, however, seems considerably less uncomprehending than it is to women who actually choose to remain single or who leave unsympathetic husbands and families in order to pursue their art or some other career.<sup>13</sup> Such women are fairly common in novels written by women, but difficult to find, except in Shaw's works, in novels written by men.

Since a woman supposedly cannot succeed in an artistic endeavor, her motive, if it is not money, must be vanity. Gissing's Alma in The Whirlpool (1897), for example, pretends to love music but, the narrator tells us, really works for attention and praise. Married, she is equally adept, depending upon her audience, at playing the role of the artist who cannot be expected to exhibit the traditional womanly qualities and the wife and mother who renounces her art for her family. She seeks public acclaim not only to satisfy her own vanity but also to prove her husband wrong in believing her incapable of professional success. To succeed she relies, however, not upon disciplined practice, but upon her beauty which she uses to manipulate men who might be of use to her. Greed for public acclaim as well as a desire to prove themselves equal or superior to particular men also motivate Strindberg's and Kipling's female artists.

Male writers attribute some commitment to art to a few female artist-characters. Some of them, like Lisaveta Ivanovna, the painter in





Mann's "Tonio Kröger" (1903), are committed to art but, because of point of view, their ability is difficult to determine. Several, all in creative media, have the commitment but clearly not the ability to justify it. Hawthorne's Hilda in The Marble Faun (1859), Strindberg's Bertha in Comrades (1888), and Kipling's Maisie in The Light That Failed (1891) are among them. The ones with both commitment and ability are almost all performing artists. Reade's Margaret Woffington and James's Miriam Rooth are more typical of such female artist-characters than is the most consummate performing female artist created by a male novelist, Proust's Berma. Reade's character and James's both put the work of art, the demands of the play, before self-display. Proust's Marcel, however, ultimately sees Berma not just as a skilled performer in a play but as the creator of another work of art that illuminates the first. So totally does she absorb her part that no deliberation is apparent in her moves. Her art superbly conceals her art.

These novels reflect a larger society in which critics treat women condescendingly when they attempt to create in media where they have been relatively successful as performers. They are expected, in other words, to know their place. In music, for example, they are singers and possibly pianists or violinists, but not composers. In the theatre they are actresses, not playwrights. Women initially found acceptance less difficult as choreographers, even though they are considered primarily as dancers, because the dance was not an art form held in sufficiently high esteem.<sup>14</sup> Whether the female artist is a composer, a playwright, a painter, a novelist, or a poet, however, she has one recurrent complaint. When, in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Aurora Leigh (1859), Romney advises Aurora to stop playing at poetry, one



reason he gives is that she will dislike the condescension accorded women artists and the praise she will receive for such accomplishments as knowing how to spell. Critics often classify the woman artist as a "woman composer," "woman playwright," "woman painter," "woman novelist," or "woman poet," not in order to isolate particular patterns in the way she is treated, but because they judge her work by a different, inferior set of standards. They consider successful works by women plagiarisms from works by male artists.<sup>15</sup> Unsuccessful works they explain by the fact that a woman created them and describe according to the notion that her art can be no more than an extension of her preoccupation with love. Not only to protect their reputations but to receive fair treatment, women hid their sex behind pseudonyms.<sup>16</sup>

Women's art, according to numerous critics, lacks the intellectual dimension necessary to make it significant. As Romney says in Aurora Leigh, women can be no more than mediocre artists because they cannot see beyond individuals to groups and because things of the heart, not things of the head, are their preoccupations. Critics who consider music the most emotional of arts and who also consider women by nature emotional, still insist that they cannot compose because to do so requires a rigid, mathematical, cold, and objective treatment of the emotions. A variation on this theme is the assertion that women lack not only creative imagination but also the kinds of powerful emotions that music best expresses, those most impersonal, universal, and spiritual.<sup>17</sup> Women playwrights, too, supposedly lack the intelligence necessary to treat emotional content objectively. Sensitive to realistic detail, they cannot order it into satisfying dramatic wholes. They tend toward sentimentality and melodrama. In dealing with characters and themes,





they cannot rid themselves of personal biases. Finally, they lack the ability to conceive of complex situations and large themes, as well as the sense of action upon which drama is based.<sup>18</sup>

Like women composers and playwrights, women painters are charged with a lack of intellect. Critics repeatedly define feminine painting as the addition of charming, but ultimately superficial qualities to the approach of one or another male master.<sup>19</sup> Lack of intellect manifests itself in a reliance upon color and a neglect of line.<sup>20</sup> The association between color and emotion, line and intellect is made by William Blake who, in "The Four Zoas," presents his male aesthetic principle, Los, as a draughtsman and his female consort, Enitharmon, as a colorist. In this tradition is Kipling, whose male painter compliments Maisie, a female painter, on her sense of color but charges her with laziness as a draughtsman. Similarly Katherine Anne Porter's male painter in Ship of Fools (1945) undermines Jenny Brown's confidence in her method of laying bright colors directly upon a blank canvas. He forces her to use a muted palette and finally to shift from painting in oils to drawing in charcoal and India ink.

In the cases of women painters as well as women novelists and poets, no performing dimension exists to which they can be relegated, even at the risk of their reputations. In media like painting and literature, the equivalent of the performing dimension is the mass market that demands book illustration and popular literature. Women are allowed some competence in these activities. If they want recognition as serious artists, however, they encounter considerable hostility. That hostility is especially apparent in painting, perhaps because of the extremely long, male-dominated tradition. In Strindberg's play, Comrades (1888),



Axel admits that he resents any recognition his wife might win as a painter for two reasons. His own painting is superior because he is a man. Moreover, he resents the fact that women painters now work under more favorable conditions than do men. After men struggle to establish traditions and develop techniques, women step in, find men to finance their lessons at art academies, and buy the product of centuries. Axel insists that women could have participated in the struggle had they wanted to or been capable of doing so. If they insist upon stepping into the picture at this stage, he thinks, they had better do so with something of their own. The plot of the play justifies Axel's hostility toward female painters. Bertha's picture is accepted by the Salon and his is refused because he magnanimously has switched their names. Bertha's apparent success unmasks her motives, greed for fame and a desire to usurp her husband's ordained superiority. Kipling's painter in The Light That Failed (1891) reacts to Maisie's desire to profit from his teaching in a similar way. She wants to obtain the easy way what he struggled for ten years to define and perfect. In both cases the suggestion is that if male artists charitably aid female artists, they will create Promethean or Satanic monsters who will turn upon them. The unintended irony is that these male painters, who scorn women's ability, for some reason fear it.

Feminine fiction, like feminine musical compositions, plays, and paintings, repeatedly is described as limited in scope, subjective, and inadequate as art. Women's writing, many critics agree, inevitably is confined to close observation and reproduction of details drawn from the author's immediate domestic and natural surroundings as well as an understanding and rendition of personal relationships, especially





those between men and women. Indeed, one explanation for women's initial attraction to the novel is that it did not seem to require specialized learning and a detailed acquaintance with public affairs.<sup>21</sup> Touched-up or daydream versions of the author's own life sufficed. Because of their lack of intellect, women writers may exhibit less disillusionment and pessimism, but they compensate with their prejudices, didacticism, snobbery, and chauvinism. Because of these limitations critics and creators of female artist-characters often charge them with triviality.<sup>22</sup> James's Greville Fane and Forster's Eleanor Lavish in A Room with a View (1908), for example, write novels that in subject-matter are sentimental and romantic. The narrator of Hawthorne's The Marble Faun (1859) remarks that, in writing as in painting, women are capable of little else. Along with lack of intellect go illogicality, lack of discipline, and the obliviousness to overall structure and proportion necessary to a successful work of art. Women writers in literature, like Forster's Miss Lavish and James's Greville Fane, have little sense of grammar or of form. Another explanation for women's initial attraction to the novel is that it was new, unformed, and undisciplined. With fewer formidable male predecessors, it had a reputation for being aesthetically inferior and less rigorous than poetry and drama.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, it had affinities with simple storytelling, letter-writing, and journal-keeping.

In the novel, however, women generally are credited with having contributed something of their own. Most historians of the genre attribute to women a wide variety of innovations in both content and form.<sup>24</sup> What critics consider weaknesses in women's art in general they often treat as strengths appropriate to prose fiction. The practical, common-



sensical realism of women's work as well as the depiction of their own emotions and experiences, many of which men do not have, are important.

Critics, in fact, look for a feminine tradition or a feminine strain in the novel. One group looks for it largely among the women writers of the last century, defines two opposing tendencies, and praises one as truly feminine.<sup>25</sup> Some confusion frequently exists between a consideration of the woman writer's subject-matter and a consideration of her treatment of it. The woman writer who is most feminine reproduces her own limited experience, perhaps idealized somewhat, and does so with little detachment or perspective. If she attains some distance, as does Jane Austen, presumably she still is sufficiently feminine to satisfy the critics who consider that a virtue. These critics condemn, or at least doubt the value or authenticity of the insights of any woman writer who creates a larger fictional world and exhibits some ability to analyze and to deal with abstract ideas. They label her, as George Eliot so often is labeled, essentially a masculine writer.<sup>26</sup> Another group of critics speaks of masculine and feminine strains in the novel independent of the biological sex of the writers discussed. These critics, most of whom look to Fielding for the masculine strain, are as likely to look to Samuel Richardson as to any of the women novelists for the feminine. Moreover, they note, justifiably, that the masters of the genre in England transcend such an overly-simple dichotomy.<sup>27</sup>

To trace changes in the novel and in the attitude of society toward it is to trace changes in the attitude toward the female novelist and toward women in general. Whether women novelists influenced the woman's movement more than the movement influenced the novelists is difficult to determine.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, many women used the novel as a





forum for their opinions about their situation. Possibly for that reason, many critics of the novel are ready to entertain alternate explanations for women's lack of significant artistic achievement. The charge that they simply lack imaginative or intellectual ability is balanced by environmental explanations. Any limitations, for example, in the subject-matter with which women can deal authoritatively result from the severe restrictions placed upon their experience, their inferior education plus their lack of exposure not only to physical dangers and hardships but also to adventure and action.

Critics who make these points are in the tradition of writers who apply to the female artist the ideas of Mary Wollstonecraft.<sup>29</sup> She is concerned with the development of women's minds and morals rather than with their creativity. In fact, she associates the arts, at least as women are exposed to them, with the emotions upon which they too readily are taught to depend. Nevertheless, her insistence that women's abilities cannot be evaluated until given outlet and her emphasis upon their characteristics as the products of a social environment that thwarts their development are themes dwelt upon by later commentators on women's artistic potential. As Madame de Staël's *Corinne* (1807), who chooses to live in Italy after spending some time in the British Isles, says, "nothing is more quenching than a constant look of disapprobation, . . . . A small object near you will intercept the sun's rays; so the society surrounding affects you . . . . so those who would be happy, and enjoy the developing of their talents, must choose a congenial atmosphere."<sup>30</sup>

The critics, novelists, and female artist-characters in the Wollstonecraft tradition challenge the idea that love inevitably constitutes a woman's life. She only seems to have more necessity for love than a



man does, Miriam points out in Hawthorne's The Marble Faun (1859), because she has been denied all other outlets for her commitments and affections. If women were allowed to direct their energies into other channels and given the same chances to do so as men, they also may develop the androgyny considered necessary to great art. A number of female artist-characters, usually among those created by women, possess such wholeness. When Madame de Staël's Corinne suggests that the perfection of many works of Greek sculpture depends upon the unity of masculine strength with feminine softness, she reflects the inclusiveness of her own blend of temperaments and abilities. Similarly, George Sand's Consuelo balances in herself the opposing northern and southern, masculine and feminine characteristics of the two men she loves and, by doing so, avoids the excesses of each. When the female artist-character does not represent inclusiveness herself, as Corinne and Consuelo do, she often represents the fundamental portion of a wholeness advocated by the novel in which she appears. Both E.B. Browning's Aurora Leigh (1859) and Rebecca West's Harriet Hume (1929) dramatize two sides of the human character, the masculine and the feminine, that need each other. In both cases the pragmatic masculine side which dominates society, must acknowledge and value the poetic, spiritual, feminine side. It must do so in order to reach truth which, Aurora Leigh concludes, transcends sex distinctions and belongs to God.

Novelists frequently suggest the inclusiveness associated with androgyny by attributing to the female artist not masculine qualities but those a utilitarian society considers foreign, exotic, wild, or mysterious. Women artists, like the male artists reared in such a society, presumably share its values. If men are to be practical, women





are to foster practicality. Any enthusiasm for art or passionate response to life requires explanation and justification. In a society that does not value the arts or the emotions, a major explanation for both is a foreign influence or foreign blood. The unusual phenomenon of the female artist, who is less likely than the male artist to travel, is best explained by exotic parentage. Since both art and passion traditionally are associated, for example by the English Romantics,<sup>31</sup> with Italy, female artist-characters often are all or part Italian. Goethe's enigmatic Mignon and some of Hoffmann's female artist-characters are Italian. Nicknamed "the Gypsy," "the Zingarella," Sand's *Consuelo* is Italian with a Bohemian element. George Eliot's Caterina is Italian, but she is raised in England by guardians.

Her situation resembles that of several female artist-characters with mixed heritages. Meredith's Emilia has an Italian father, who was exiled for his complicity in a plot to free Italy from Austrian domination, and an English mother; Hawthorne's Miriam has an English mother with some Jewish blood and an Italian nobleman for a father. In novels written by women, however, the female artist-character's mother rather than her father more often is Italian. This fact reflects the freedom of men to travel and, if they wish, to behave irresponsibly toward the women they meet in foreign countries. More importantly, it implies a definition of England and some other northern European countries as cultures in which masculine rationality and materialism are dominant and Italy as one in which feminine irrationality and art prevail. Such a character does appear in Hoffmann's "Rat Krespel" (1813), but the major prototype is Madame de Staël's Corinne, who has an English father and an Italian mother. Published in 1807 and translated in the same



year into English, Corinne was well-known in England and America in the nineteenth century. It clearly is in the background of many subsequent portrayals of women and of female artists in these countries.<sup>32</sup> Hawthorne's Miriam identifies specifically with Corinne. Jewsbury's Bianca in The Half Sisters (1848), like Corinne, has an English father and an Italian mother. Her English half-sister, however, is the one who actually reads Madame de Staël's novel. Browning's Aurora Leigh does not mention Corinne but, with her English father and Italian mother, she follows the pattern.

Even if their potential androgeneity is acknowledged, female artists have trouble actually producing art. Florence Nightingale, in "Cassandra," for example, mentions lack of encouragement and training, but emphasizes lack of time:

Mrs. A. has the imagination, the poetry of a Murillo, and has sufficient power of execution to show that she might have had a great deal more. Why is she not a Murillo? From a material difficulty, not a mental one. If she has a knife and fork in her hands for three hours of the day, she cannot have a pencil or brush . . . . If she has a pen and ink in her hands during other three hours, writing answers for the penny post, again, she cannot have her pencil, and so ad infinitum through life.<sup>33</sup>

Women cannot pursue any intellectual or artistic activity systematically, she adds, because of the prevailing notion that nothing they do, except nurse babies, is of such importance that it cannot be interrupted. They must subordinate their desires for individual development to the demands of husband and children. If women want time to themselves without offending anyone, they must either get up early or stay up late. Men could not achieve, she suggests, under such conditions.

The most complete nineteenth-century dramatization of the effect of circumstances upon the female artist is Mona Caird's The Daughters of





Danaus (1894). Overtly didactic, the novel opens with and frequently refers back to a discussion of Emerson's view that a man's character determines his circumstances, not vice versa. Hadria Fullerton, Caird's female artist-character, reluctantly disagrees. She suggests that the triumph of some great artists over adverse conditions does nothing to prove that numerous others have not been vanquished. When, for example, gifted women of her own comfortably wealthy social class desire to develop and gain recognition for their abilities, they have more difficulty than men because the traditions of society grant women so little freedom. Even Valeria Du Prel, a relatively successful novelist who believes that will can triumph over circumstances, cautions that all of one's energy may be spent in the struggle and that the triumph may arrive too late. While she lives with her parents, Hadria's composing is thwarted whether she insists upon being granted time and solitude or gives in to her mother's demands on her energies. In the former instance, the upheaval which precedes her solitude leaves her nervous and depressed. In the latter instance, she has no solitude at all. If she avoids the issue and stays up nights to work on her compositions, melancholy pieces with titles like "Futility," her health suffers.

Hadria concludes that circumstances usually destroy in women most of what elevates human beings above animals. Neither defiance nor submission solves their problems. Her own abortive rebellion is illustrative. Leaving husband and children in order to study music in Paris, she must return to England when her father loses his money and her mother's health fails. This illness, partly a result of Hadria's rebellion, will prove fatal if the patient is opposed in anything. Therefore, Hadria must sacrifice her ambitions and considerable ability as a



composer to the endless details of managing both her parents' household and her own. She compares the situation of women to that of a healthy sapling stunted and bent because it must grow in a cranny, but she observes that the sapling makes cracks in the masonry and thus takes its revenge; eventually the building will tumble. Women, she hopes, will not endlessly draw water in sieves like the daughters of Danaus in the myth and think they are useful simply because their occupation tires them.

Until such progress is made, however, the pattern in the female Künstlerroman often will be a variation of the pattern in the male. In the latter the potential artist confronts obstacles but usually achieves some awareness of his vocation, even some degree of artistic maturity. Society's definition of the male role precludes neither artistic potential nor fulfillment by means of art. Some members of a practical society may think he could put his energies to better use, but others, usually women, willingly sacrifice so that he may gain his ends. In the female Künstlerroman, the pattern more often is one of frustration, disillusionment, resignation, or even, as in the case of Olive Schreiner's Lyndall, death. When circumstances are overcome, as they are by Mary Austin's Olivia, they are overcome at considerable cost.

John Stewart Mill, a much less angry advocate of the environmental explanation than either Florence Nightingale or Mona Caird, points out that, in addition to being taught to give their time to everyone else, women are not encouraged, as men are, to be eager for celebrity, to think of themselves as professionals except in the theatre, or to consider themselves creators of art rather than performers. Their achievements equal men's if they are compared to amateur not professional male





artists and presumably, although Mill does not say so, to male performers rather than male creators. Against the recurrent charge that female artists lack originality, Mill points out that originality requires a full knowledge of the results of previous thinking and that women have not had the necessary education. Moreover, any thoughts they have had probably were lost through lack of encouragement and expression.<sup>34</sup>

The case Bertha makes in Strindberg's Comrades (1888) against Axel, her husband, echoes some of Mill's points. It is worth consideration apart from the context of Strindberg's misogyny. Contrary to her husband, Bertha insists that women have not been allowed to participate in the struggle to establish techniques and traditions in painting. She wins the right to hire nude male models on the grounds that Axel has nude female models, but she cannot overcome his view of the situation as deplorable. His reaction supports her case. So does a good deal of external evidence. Women, in painting as in some of the other art media, have been denied adequate training. Even when art schools finally began to admit them, female artists confronted financial and academic obstacles that their male counterparts did not have to face. Administrators opposed their protests against inequities by insisting that money and training were wasted on women who usually married and gave up their art. Criticized for inferior work and denied the means to improve, women were expected to continue and even to achieve. If they could not draw credible human bodies during periods when the human form dominated painting and sculpture, often they could not do so because an intensive study of anatomy and drawing from nude models was considered unsuitable for women. Only in the late nineteenth century did they begin



to have access to such training, often separate from their studies at art academies and often at their own expense.<sup>35</sup>

In literature written by women during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the female artist more frequently than in literature written by men is an important character and is so in her capacity as artist. As female artist-characters may be relegated to part of the social milieu or to their importance in a male artist-character's life in novels written by men, so male artist-characters may be relegated to similar positions in novels written by women. Rarely, however, does the male artist embody an aesthetic ideal to which the female artist aspires. Related to the rejection of the idea that a woman's life is love is a rejection of the idea that her art is, as in the case of Wilde's *Sybil Vane*, a substitute for love. Nor is it wholly dependent upon love for some man. Love may cause an improvement in the female artist's art because it adds a warmth previously lacking, or, more frequently, because she uses her art to win a man's approval.

In Evelyn Innes (1898) Moore's Owen Asher says that men originally needed art to woo women and then became interested in it for its own sake. Women, who had no such need, did not become artists. Asher's observation, based on the assumption that men are the active and women the passive parties in relationships between the sexes, is not supported by the literature in which female artist-characters appear. Actresses and singers often view their art, on one level at least, as a means of increasing their worth in the eyes of particular men or as gifts of themselves to the men they love. This element is present in the art of Madame de Staël's *Corinne*, Jewsbury's *Bianca*, and Mary Austin's *Olivia*. All of these women, however, are talented whether out of love or in





and are committed to art for its own sake. The actresses in Austin's novel conclude that all experience is useful to the actress, including the experience of not being in love. As Browning's Aurora Leigh asks, "Must I work in vain,/ Without the approbation of a man?/ It cannot be; it shall not."<sup>36</sup>

Ironically, the men whom female artists try to impress with their art often are repelled by it. Women writers, however, less frequently accept the charge that women in the performing arts or in any of the creative media inevitably behave improperly or immorally. If the serious woman artist actually is immoral, Mona Caird insists in The Daughters of Danaus, she is so because her abilities have been thwarted by circumstances and her energies forced into corrupt channels. Conrad Percy's view of the actress in Jewsbury's The Half Sisters is challenged by Lord Melton on similar grounds. The woman who is kept dependent and ignorant of the world, whose abilities have no legitimate outlet, not the woman pursuing a public career, is likely to be corrupt. In the case of the actress, Melton points to the hypocrisy of men who applaud her vigorously every night yet are contemptuous of her profession. He points out, in addition, the injustice of condemning the actress because her audience consists largely of people with inferior motives and tastes. Regardless of her audience, the actress can be motivated by a love for her art.

Melton's attitude governs the characterization of many female artists by earlier women novelists. Unlike many male writers, these women tend to present, not female artists who renounce their inevitably immoral careers, but women who, in the midst of unsavory surroundings remain virtuous. Madame de Staël does not dwell upon the issue in



Corinne; she merely gives no indication that Corinne's many male followers might be anything more than friends. Sand's Consuelo, however, is aggressively virtuous and devout in spite of continual exposure to vice. Jewsbury's Bianca and Eliot's Mirah Lapidoth are in this tradition as well as, among female artist-characters in creative media, Browning's Aurora Leigh, Anne Brontë's Helen Huntingdon, and Mrs. Craik's Olive.

One reason for this tendency in the characterization of female artists by women is the greater role commitment to art plays in their careers. That commitment, moreover, often is justified by real ability. Even when financial necessity motivates them, it more frequently is combined with a love of art. The need for money may be the initial impetus and love of the art may develop, as in the cases of Jewsbury's Bianca and Mrs. Craik's Olive. An already-existing love of art may prove lucrative in a time of economic distress as in the case of Anne Brontë's Helen Huntingdon. Or the need for money may compel the female artist to utilize some inferior dimension of her ability so that she can remain sufficiently independent to practice as a serious artist. Browning's Aurora, for example, decides to earn her living by prose rather than by the poetry to which she is committed as an artist. The kind of poetry that sells, she is convinced, invariably is bad.

George Sand in Consuelo (1844) pits the assertion that female artists can be motivated by love for art against the charge of vanity. She contrasts Consuelo to Anzoletto, a male singer and actor. He, not she, is vain and covets applause. Instead of studying thoroughly any music or any of the techniques necessary to render it with taste and understanding, he relies upon his own audacious touches and his physical





attractiveness to win him instant acclaim. Consuelo, in contrast, relies upon careful preparation and loving comprehension of the work she performs rather than upon superficial flourishes or her beauty, which, in fact, is not striking. Sand does not imply that female artists are without vanity; the existence in the novel of singers like Corilla proves otherwise. She does suggest that the same vanity characteristic of so many women in the theatre motivates many men who become actors. The existence of an audience affects performers, regardless of sex, in the same way. Consuelo's commitment to art indicates the likelihood of exceptions existing among women as well as among men. Other women writers juxtapose female artist-characters motivated by vanity to committed ones. In Daniel Deronda (1876), for example, George Eliot juxtaposes Gwendolyn Harleth's misguided reasons for wanting to become an actress to Mirah Lapidoth's unassuming application to her singing. More recently, Rebecca West in The Fountain Overflows (1957) contrasts Cordelia's vanity and lack of real ability to the modesty and skill of her mother and her sisters.

More recent male writers and characters are less critical of the morality of female artists and artist-characters; more recent female writers are less defensive about it. To a certain extent, the issue is dated. Shaw, for example, puts the blame for any supposed immorality upon society. If it ignores the actress's personal merits and refuses either to accept her socially or to aid her financially, it encourages her to become indifferent to its opinions or forces her into situations it defines as immoral. Shaw's characterization of Susanna Conolly, whose stage name ironically is Lalage Virtue, in The Irrational Knot (1880), like Mary Austin's A Woman of Genius (1912) dramatize this point.



Twentieth-century women novelists present female artist-characters who, while not profligate, understandably deviate from too-rigid traditional notions of feminine virtue. Some live with men they love because, for some reason, they cannot marry them; others do not want to combine careers with traditional marriages. In addition to Austin's Olivia, the situations of Cather's Thea Kronborg and, most recently, Johnson's Catherine Carter are illustrative.

If a male artist appears in women's novels with major female artist-characters, he does so as a teacher or advisor, often considerably older. In this respect he is not treated so negligently by women writers as the female artist is treated by men. The male artist's ability generally is acknowledged and his advice is valued. Nevertheless, when his understanding of the problems peculiar to the female artist's situation is required, often he fails. One of the enlightened male characters in Caird's The Daughters of Danaus cannot understand why a woman cannot be a wife and mother without being anything else and why marriage cannot liberate instead of imprison. Most of the male mentors who speak with some experience of female artists, however, do not question the institution of marriage as society defines it. They simply conclude that a woman cannot be both wife and artist and then wonder why their protégée objects. Repeatedly they advise the female artists they befriend to reject the traditional female role, to marry their art instead of men. Porpora in Sand's Consuelo and the old actor in Jewsbury's The Half-Sisters view the female artist as a priestess devoted to powers higher than mortal men. Other male mentors and friends, like Jouffroy in Caird's novel, Vanbrugh in Mrs. Craik's Olive, and Heggan in Undset's Jenny (1930), admire women's artistic ability but deplore





their lack of perseverance, commitment, and dependability, their readiness to sacrifice art for love, marriage, and motherhood. They, too, urge women to keep free of the ties of kindred.

A good many female artist-characters reject this advice and eventually renounce their careers. Their doing so is not so much a rejection of art as it is a resigned acceptance of a situation that makes them choose either it or intimate relationships with other people. Art, they insist, is not enough. Again Madame de Staël's Corinne is seminal. The novel upholds the right of a woman to develop and exercise her abilities outside of the domestic sphere, but also reflects fear and abhorrence of the penalty such a woman seems to have to pay, that of loneliness and lovelessness, because of man's inability to accept her in anything but a traditional role.<sup>37</sup> Corinne's artistic ability is great so long as she does not fall seriously in love. When she does, the sensitivity that goes with her ability causes her to suffer. Her uniqueness and the high expectations she has of the man she is capable of loving decrease the probability that, if she finds him, he will be willing and free to reciprocate. Like Corinne, Jewsbury's Bianca insists that she needs someone to whom she can dedicate her artistic efforts. The ease with which she renounces her career at the end of the novel to marry Lord Melton is consistent with her earlier protestations against the advice that she dedicate herself to art. It is inconsistent, however, with the actual dedication that she so frequently exhibits.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, when Sand's Consuelo is told to think of herself and her art rather than of human ties, she exclaims that while she loves art for its own sake, the price it exacts is too high if she loses everyone she loves. She cannot comprehend a destiny that pulls her in two seemingly



irreconcilable directions. Like Mrs. Craik's Olive, Browning's Aurora, Clemance Dane's Madala Gray, and Sigrid Undset's Jenny after her, Consuelo asserts that art is not enough.

Whether or not the female artist-character actually is advised to marry her art alone, a recognition of the difficulties of combining intimate relationships with men and an artistic career forms a large part of the characterization of many female artists in literature. The conflict is prevalent in portrayals of male artists as well, but because they do not confront a tradition that insists upon their incapacity in any field other than intimate human relationships, their conflict is of a different nature. Men may have to worry about conflicting demands upon their time and energy as well as about money sufficient to support their dependents, but their artistic potential and their right to develop it apart from their role as husband and father are taken for granted. Moreover, the bachelor who is an artist rarely is described as unfulfilled. The female artist-character who insists that art is not enough usually is not saying that love is a woman's only preoccupation. She merely wonders why she should have to make a choice so unreasonable as one between art and marriage. Increasingly in novels with major female artist-characters, especially those written by women, the issue is perceived less as a choice between art and marriage and more as a choice between one kind of man and another. Most female artists who are major characters come to know well, become intimately involved with, or even marry several men. They ultimately reject not marriage per se but marriage to particular conventional men. When such men or their families ask female artists to give up their careers for marriage, often they refuse. Austin's Olivia, for example, rejects Helmeth Garrett's offer





of marriage and James's Miriam Rooth rejects Peter Sherringham's for that reason. The female artist may relent, as Browning's Aurora does, when the man eventually admits his error in demanding such a sacrifice.

Female artists who do marry conventional men and seriously try to pursue their art have little success in doing both. Not only the marriage of Caird's Hadria but the early marriage of Austin's Olivia suffer. When female artist-characters are popular, not serious artists, or when they renounce careers pursued largely to support themselves and become contented amateurs, then they may form satisfactory alliances with conventional men. Anne Brontë's Helen and Meredith's Diana give no indication of continuing their art on a professional level when, at the end of the two novels, they finally contract satisfactory marriages. A woman with much ability and commitment, however, like Cather's Aunt Georgiana in "A Wagner Matinee" (1905), may regret such a renunciation.

Intimate relationships with or marriages to less conventional men, however, are rare in the lives of female artist-characters in nineteenth and twentieth-century literature. Apparently few men exist or even can be imagined who encourage and take pride in their wives' commitment to and achievement in anything but the domestic sphere. In the few instances when such a male character appears, his wife does not know how to react to him or to her situation. Gissing in The Whirlpool (1897) implies that no matter what women say they want, they really want and inevitably need masculine protection and guidance. Alma marries a man who insists that she not sacrifice her individuality to his. He gives her so much freedom, in fact, that she thinks he does not care for her. Caird, in The Daughters of Danaus, however,



sees differently the similar case of the unconventional Professor Fortesque and his conventional wife. Her fault is not in thinking she is unconventional when she cannot be; instead, a fault in her training renders her incapable of appreciating her rare and admirable husband.

A relationship with a male artist would seem to be the solution for the female artist. Such a man should be able to understand and make allowances for the demands of creative activity. Actually male artist-characters are just as conventional as nonartists in their attitude toward the female artist. They may be even less sympathetic, as we already have observed in the cases of Strindberg's Comrades and Kipling's The Light That Failed where they consider female artists capable only of draining men of their knowledge and then, without gratitude or deference, of providing them with inferior but nevertheless unwelcome competition. Even worse for the male artist is a realization that the female artist's abilities are superior to his. Male artist-characters in Sand's Consuelo, Wilson's "Ellen Terhune," and Johnson's Catherine Carter experience such realizations and take a variety of steps to restore their threatened self-esteem.

The few satisfactory relationships between female and male artists occur when she inspires his work or, as in the cases of female artists and conventional men, when she gives up her professional career and pursues art only as a pastime or produces popular art which adds to their income without damaging his self-respect. One other possibility is the subordination of the male artist's career to his wife's. Usually novelists present such marriages, whether or not the man is an artist, negatively. That of Miriam Rooth and Basil Dashwood at the end of James's The Tragic Muse (1890), however, is a partial exception.





Miriam wants a husband who will work closely with her and be proud of his share in her successes. Basil, a moderately-talented actor who loves the theatre and has considerable managerial ability, is delighted to devote himself to furthering his wife's career.

With the challenge to the notion that love is a woman's only interest goes a challenge to the inferior set of standards according to which her work is evaluated. Such a thing as feminine art, if it exists, does not exist inevitably. Mill, for one, says that women eventually will dare to create honestly, not as women but as individuals expressing individual views. That generalizations about the content or style of works by women increasingly are difficult to make is clear from some of the critical commentary on them. In the case of women writers, for example, Elizabeth Drew cautiously notes that while even modern women writers have certain characteristics in common, they do not fit the established stereotype. Some she finds stern, some intellectual, some impersonal, some satirical, and all more frank than previously.<sup>39</sup> Indeed some doubt exists as to whether works produced by men and women ever were so distinct. Possibly women writers and artists in general always have more in common with the other artists of their own historical period than they have with each other.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the frequent inability of editors and publishers to detect female writers when they use male pseudonyms and male writers when they use female pseudonyms, casts doubt upon the idea that sex must be a determining factor in art.<sup>41</sup>

The view of woman as biologically determined, then, dominates the treatment of the female artist in much of the nineteenth and twentieth century criticism and literature. The view of the female artist as a



victim of circumstances opposes it but always carries the burden of proof. The woman artist is considered inferior until proven competent. The environmentalists insist, however, that until she is considered competent and granted the encouragement, training, and opportunities associated with confidence in her potential, she will remain inferior. To grant her these necessitates a radical change in society's definition of woman's role. With that redefinition, the interest in the female artist of Sinclair, Richardson, and Woolf begins.





## B. Virginia Woolf: Suffragette or Artist

"It is my belief . . . that, when my sex shall achieve its rights, there will be ten eloquent women where there is now one eloquent man. Thus far, no woman in the world has ever spoken out her whole heart and her whole mind. The mistrust and disapproval of the vast bulk of society throttles us, as with two gigantic hands at our throats!"

Zenobia in Hawthorne's Blithedale Romance (1852)

The creation of female artist-characters who both try to function in a hostile social environment and seek aesthetic forms appropriate to their view of reality is inseparable in the work of May Sinclair, Dorothy Richardson, and Virginia Woolf from their attitudes toward the controversy about women's status in society. All three women were intensely interested in the suffrage movement and wrote essays about it as well as dramatized the issues it raised in many of their novels and short stories. Together their works represent a number of the differing emphases characterizing discussions of the relationships between the sexes.

Most important is the question of environmentally-caused versus inherent differences. Woolf, while she follows Sinclair and Richardson chronologically in the major expression of her views on this subject, on the whole stays closer than they do to the assumption of the early feminists that women's characteristics and problems result from the role society assigns them. Richardson, who admits the influence of environmental factors and rejects the reduction of women to reproducers of the race, nevertheless concludes that a difference in consciousness exists between men and women and that the difference is inherent. Sinclair, although the oldest of the three writers, is the one who strikes



a balance between the two positions. She sees women's social circumstances as having followed from inherent factors, but to an inordinate extent. Neither the traditional reduction of women to reproducers of the race nor the newer, opposing tendency to deny the biological role that nature has assigned them is valid. All three women agree, however, that, whether the cause is environmental or inherent, women's values are different from men's. All three agree, moreover, that their male-dominated society needs these values. To the extent that society includes art, Woolf and Sinclair especially feel a conflict between the artist and the suffragette. The woman who is an artist must choose between art and politics as a sphere of activity. In seeing the end of that activity as an injection of women's values into the larger society, by whatever means, all three women ultimately view the suffrage movement as part of something larger, as an issue more metaphysical than political. Because they see it in this larger context, they simultaneously can object to some of the methods and tendencies of the movement and, in the cases of Richardson and Sinclair, defend even its more violent manifestations.

Woolf's feminism has been much-discussed. She was not a feminist in any narrow sense of the word.<sup>1</sup> In Three Guineas she foresees both the destruction of the label and, in place of the unproductive antagonism between men and women that it suggests, a united effort to achieve the same goals (TG 185).<sup>2</sup> In A Writer's Diary, moreover, she records her fear that as a result of A Room of One's Own, she will be "attacked for a feminist and hinted at for a Sapphist" (WD 148) rather than taken seriously. "Feminism," therefore, is a label with enough negative connotations to make Woolf, like a number of other





women,<sup>3</sup> dissociate herself from it. The critics who follow her lead in this matter and note her objection to the feminists' tendency to imitate men, usually cite her observations upon the differences between the sexes as opposed to their similarities. Woolf certainly does emphasize these differences, but with a consistent stress upon environmental as opposed to inherent causes. "For though many instincts are held more or less in common by both sexes," she says in Three Guineas, "to fight has always been the man's habit, not the woman's. Law and practice have developed that difference, whether innate or accidental" (TG 13). When later in the book she notes again the marked differences between the sexes, she stresses once more law and habit as the explanatory factors:

. . . we need not have recourse to the dangerous and uncertain theories of psychologists and biologists; we can appeal to facts. Take the fact of education. Your class has been educated at public schools and universities for five or six hundred years, ours for sixty. Take the fact of property. Your class possesses in its own right and not through marriage practically all the capital, all the land, all the valuables, and all the patronage in England. Our class possesses in its own right and not through marriage practically none of the capital, none of the land, none of the valuables, and none of the patronage in England. That such differences make for very considerable differences in mind and body, no psychologist or biologist would deny. It would seem to follow then as an indisputable fact that "we"--meaning by "we" a whole made up of body, brain and spirit, influenced by memory and tradition--must still differ in some essential respects from "you," whose body, brain and spirit have been so differently trained and are so differently influenced by memory and tradition. Though we see the same world, we see it through different eyes (TG 33-4).

Woolf sees considerable value in the woman's point of view. She is afraid that, since many fundamental similarities do exist between the sexes, women will become too much like men. For this reason she does not counsel women to set up hierarchies, particularly in the form of the kinds of societies men join. "Is there not something in



the conglomeration of people into societies," she asks, "that releases what is most selfish and violent, least rational and humane in the individuals themselves?" (TG 191).<sup>4</sup> As much because of the similarities between the sexes as because of the differences, therefore, Woolf objects to feminist organizations. Male traditions, and the formation of organizations is one of them, tend to release some of the elements of human nature that are better repressed by both sexes.

Woolf undoubtedly had other reasons for not affiliating herself formally with any of the suffrage societies. Perhaps she identifies with Katharine Hilbery in Night and Day who describes her visit to Mary Datchet at the suffrage office and asserts that she will not join the society. Mr. Hilbery observes that "'the sight of one's fellow-enthusiasts always chokes one off. They show up the faults of one's cause so much more plainly than one's antagonists'" and destroy the illusions one can maintain in private (ND 100). The meager Mr. Clac-ton with his passion for detail and order as well as the exuberant but disorganized Mrs. Seal who run the suffrage office Katharine visits are not particularly inspiring representatives of the movement. The suggestion that Woolf shrank from affiliating herself formally with a movement that had so many unimpressive advocates as well as so many ugly, demeaning, and bizarre aspects probably is, at least in part, correct.<sup>5</sup>

None of the feminists Woolf sketches briefly in her fiction is wholly admirable. Evelyn Murgatroyd in The Voyage Out wants to accomplish social reforms instead of just talk about them; consequently, she wants to replace in positions of power inferior, brutish men with superior, noble women. She assumes antagonism rather than cooperation





between the sexes (VO 301-2). Julia Hedge in Jacob's Room is angry and bitter and imitates with a vengeance the methods of men. Waiting for her books in the British Museum, she swears and thinks bitterly of the men's names ranged all around the dome and then fervently of the enormous intellectual task to which she must apply herself for the sake of the cause (JR 173). In Mrs. Dalloway, Sally Seton, a potential writer or painter, defends women's suffrage (MD 276). She denounces Hugh Whitbread as the uninformed, unthinking, unfeeling representative of all that in British middle-class life is responsible for the situation of women (MD 110). Apparently, however, she is productive artistically only in her youth and does no more than talk about women's rights. She marries a bald cotton manufacturer and has five sons (MD 277). In all three cases, Woolf presents women interested in suffrage who misdirect a certain amount of their energy.

Mary Datchet in Night and Day is Woolf's most serious attempt to understand the feminist. Mary, somewhat like Evelyn Murgatroyd, is determined to accomplish much. Politically radical, she directs her desire to mobilize, organize, and wield power toward a thorough reconstruction of the suffrage society to which she belongs. Thoroughly at home in committee rooms, where questions seem to her to have right and wrong sides and where her commanding attitude impresses the other members, she enjoys vanquishing her opponents. Mary, as the narrator observes, is not only a politician but also an egoist (ND 137). She is a complex character, however, in a way that Woolf's more briefly-sketched feminists are not. Her confrontation with the fact that Ralph Denham does not love her shortly precedes another defeat in the women's campaign for the vote. With her diminished chances for personal



happiness, Mary also has doubts about the general happiness for which she works, as well as doubts about her certainty of right and wrong. She feels deprived of the particular and condemned to toil in the realm of the universal.

The importance in her life of the personal and the particular is revealed in a sensitivity to her surroundings and a delight in her independent life and intellect that remind us of Richardson's Miriam:

There were few mornings when Mary did not look up, as she bent to lace her boots, and as she followed the yellow rod from curtain to breakfast-table she usually breathed some sigh of thankfulness that her life provided her with such moments of pure enjoyment. She was robbing no one of anything, and yet, to get so much pleasure from simple things, such as eating one's breakfast alone in a room which had nice colours in it, clean from the skirting of the boards to the corners of the ceiling, seemed to suit her so thoroughly that she used at first to hunt about for some one to apologize to, or for some flaw in the situation (ND 74).

Mary has a room of her own; she is observant and sensitive; and she has the private moments of insight which balance her public, political self. When she laughingly tells Ralph, "'Men are such pedants--they don't know what things matter, and what things don't'" (ND88), she voices Woolf's assessment of the major difference between male and female writers, the difference in values. Mary, moreover, is not subservient to traditions. "What was the good, after all," she thinks, "of being a woman if one didn't keep fresh, and cram one's life with all sorts of views and experiments?" (ND 76). Her observation echoes a theme to which Woolf continually returns in A Writer's Diary. She affirms her love of change, her related conviction that truth is elusive, relative, or multiple, and her desire to experiment with contrasting styles and subjects (WD 136-7; 195; 220).

The characteristics and attitudes of the feminists in Woolf's





fiction parallel those of the various kinds of women writers she discusses in her essays. This fact reinforces the link between her attitude toward the woman's movement and her aesthetics. At the same time it suggests the necessity of a choice between the political and artistic spheres of activity. The woman writer, like the feminist, may think her sex superior. Instead of seeking to replace men with women in positions of power, she may write in a defiantly feminine manner. The woman writer may imitate, like the feminist, the methods of men. Or she may choose the traditional female role and give up her art. The two sides of Mary Datchet are particularly important. On the one hand, Mary is public, political, and self-absorbed. On the other, she is sensitive to small, everyday objects and actions; she delights in her independent life and mind. The characteristics of one side of Mary are inimical to the production of art; that side accepts and imitates male values and behavior. The characteristics of her other side, however, are prerequisites for the female artist as Woolf sees her. Mary's public side exhausts most of her energies. Woolf and her female artist-characters choose another route.

The theme of politics versus the arts recurs in the novels as well as elsewhere in Woolf's work. The best example is the contrast between Richard Dalloway and Rachel Vinrace in The Voyage Out. Dalloway is a politician who is opposed to women's suffrage. He defends his career by contrasting it to that of the artist:

"We politicians doubtless seem . . . a gross commonplace set of people; but we see both sides; we may be clumsy, but we do our best to get a grasp of things. Now your artists find things in a mess, shrug their shoulders, turn aside to their visions--which I grant may be very beautiful--and leave things in a mess. Now that seems to me evading one's responsibilities. Besides, we aren't all born with the artistic faculty" (VO 45).



Rachel, an accomplished if not a professional pianist, attacks Dalloway's political practicality and defends the artist against charges of irresponsibility. The politician may improve slightly the material well-being of certain people, but he ignores their minds and feelings just as he ignores his own. Dalloway retorts that women do not and ought not understand politics (VO 71-2). As her discussion of the subject in Three Guineas reveals, Woolf agrees; women ought not understand politics since politics has not produced admirable results either in England or in the world.

Leonard Woolf undoubtedly is right when he calls his wife "the least political animal that has lived since Aristotle invented the definition." He insists, however, upon her interested and sensitive response to all aspects of her environment, including the political.<sup>6</sup> That the conflict between political and artistic involvement was a recurrent issue in Woolf's mind is indicated further by a diary entry in 1919. "It seems to me more and more clear," she says, "that the only honest people are the artists, and that these social reformers and philanthropists get so out of hand and harbour so many discreditable desires under the disguise of loving their kind, that in the end there's more to find fault with in them than in us." She softens her denunciation of politicians, however, by asking, "But if I were one of them?" (WD 17-18).

No doubt the women's suffrage movement tempted Woolf more than anything else to become one of them. Winifred Holtby probably is right when she explains Woolf's lack of affiliation with the suffrage movement as a choice of art over politics. To the female artist, Holtby suggests, the suffrage movement was a mixed blessing. It aimed





for a social environment more conducive to the acceptance and achievement of the female artist; at the same time it demanded that she devote her time and energy not to her art but to the movement. She could produce no significant art either without the movement or within it.<sup>7</sup> If the female artist's room of her own was not denied her altogether, it was invaded by marching, banner-waving women. Woolf had a room of her own, and, while she listened with interest to what the marching women had to say, most of the time she shooed them out and locked the door. Then she set about dealing with the problems of women in her own way, as an artist. Her choice is reflected in To the Lighthouse at the moment when Lily Briscoe, the painter, feels a kinship with Mr. Carmichael, the poet, because "some notion was in both of them about the ineffectiveness of action, the supremacy of thought" (L 301).

To the woman artist financial and intellectual independence are more important, in Woolf's eyes, than the vote. Without that independence women will not have the courage to express their values even if they are enfranchised. In The Voyage Out, Hewet, a novelist interested in the situation of women, makes this point. As long as even well-educated women see men as larger-than-life, he thinks, they are unlikely to do anything with the vote even should they get it (VO 252). Woolf herself apparently preferred to utilize her financial and to demonstrate her intellectual independence before she worried about suffrage. She apparently preferred to help the cause by transcending political polemics and stereotyped notions about the sexes, by attempting to prove that a woman can write as a whole person and produce significant art, by portraying sensitively aspects of the experience of women that had not been treated sufficiently, by communicating



women's values, and by going further to explore the nature of the human condition itself.

Woolf chooses, like Antigone, "not to break the laws, but to find the law" (TG 249-50). She considers Antigone's distinction between "the laws and the Law" a better definition of the individual's responsibility to society than those of either sociologists or theologians (TG 148). Like Antigone she prefers to say, "'Tis not my nature to join in hating, but in loving" (TG 303). She identifies, therefore, not with the suffragettes who break windows and burn pillar boxes, but with the heroic women whose numerous biographies she reads. Some wanted to learn mathematics, some music and its composition, some to paint the human body (TG 249-50). Just as there are laws and the Law, so there are feminists and Feminists. To be a Feminist to Woolf means to be an artist.





C. Dorothy Richardson: Victim or Victor

"If a woman had painted the . . . picture, there might have been something in it which we miss now."

Miriam in Hawthorne's The Marble Faun (1859)

"It is well that women should write if they are sincere enough to describe what no man has yet seen: the depths of the soul of a woman. But only very few dared to do that: most of them only wrote to attract the men . . . ."

Romain Rolland, Jean Christophe in Paris (1911)

As in the case of Woolf, Richardson's interest in the female artist's problems is related closely to her interest in the British women's suffrage movement. In one of her autobiographical sketches, she admits that for a brief period in her life she was preoccupied totally with the suffrage issue.<sup>1</sup> As is usually the case with Richardson, a judicious counterpointing of her published opinions and those of Miriam Henderson in Pilgrimage provides the most comprehensive statement of her position. Miriam is critical of as well as attracted to the movement.<sup>2</sup> She does not join it formally. Perhaps she does not do so because, as she says in another context, "fighting and clutching destroys things before you get them; or destroys you" (IV CH 330).<sup>3</sup> Such violent activity seems too much a part of a value system that is masculine. Perhaps she does not join because, although she thinks it contemptible for women to smile wisely and refuse to give expression to their values, she does not find "a contempt for men" a viable alternative. Having exhibited it frequently enough herself, she knows that it "introduces sourness into one's own life" (III D1 218).

Moreover, Miriam objects to the idea of voting as unfeminine. Women have the ability, she thinks, to balance and synthesize all points



of view. Voting and joining political parties requires them to deny this ability by taking sides (IV MM 624-5; III RL 394). By the final sections of Pilgrimage Miriam comes to associate not only the vote but the entire agitation concerning women's position with the superficial, external world. She concludes that her feminism has been "intermittent" and that she no longer cares about the injustices still prevalent. Her anger and resentment have abated (IV DH 504). Like Woolf and like Antigone, whose example Woolf cites, Miriam decides that love not hate is "'the supreme power'" (IV MM 560; cf IV MM 579).

Miriam chiefly objects to the feminists' lack of faith in women. She objects to the idea that women need emancipation and to any related implication that they ought to have the opportunities to think and to behave like men. Women, she insists, are emancipated. As a group they have been restricted by laws which are insults; but never have they been mastered, made subject, or victimized in any essential way. She objects, moreover, to the feminists' adoption of the mistaken male notion that women are among the chaotic forces in need of civilization. On the contrary, women possess within themselves the only real civilization, and the civilization of the external world with which men concern themselves is retarded because they refuse to recognize and to include all that women represent (III RL 394; III D1 219). Miriam thus undermines the environmental emphasis of the feminists, their assertion that women are the products primarily of the restrictions imposed upon them by a male-dominated society and value-system. Like Richardson, her creator, she insists that woman's synthetic consciousness "has always made its own world, irrespective of circumstances" and therefore has remained free.<sup>4</sup> Both character and creator are more likely to see not





women, but men as the victims of their mistaken notions about the sexes.

Miriam voices her objection to the feminists to Michael Shatov, who, much to her surprise, declares himself one. "How could any one be a feminist," she asks herself, "and still think women most certainly inferior beings?" She answers her own question by associating Shatov with the Huxleys who advocate giving women unlimited opportunities but, at the same time, insist that they are inherently incapable of what men define as great achievements (III D1 216). That Miriam's assessment of Shatov's feminism is essentially correct is indicated by his response to her denunciation of the feminists' insistence that women have been subject. "'These things,'" he says, much as Woolf does later in Three Guineas, "'are all matters of opinion. Whereas it is a matter of indisputable fact that in the past women have been subject'" (III D1 219). "'If you believe that,'" Miriam declares, "'it is impossible for us to associate. Because we are living in two utterly different worlds.'" She insists that she cannot live, cheerfully regarding herself "'as an emancipated slave, with traditions of slavery for memory and the form of a slave as an everlasting heritage'" (III D1 219). She is determined to see women as individuals, not as an aggregate. Her own generalizations about them as individuals, she says, are justified whereas men's generalizations about women as a group are not. Unlike men she does not generalize about the potential and achievements of a group but about the existence of individual, untouched, unrecognized inner lives. What she does, she tries to explain, has something in common with Christianity meaning not, as Shatov is quick to point out, the unenviable position of women in Christian



countries, but rather the fact that "'Christ was the first man to see women as individuals'" (III D1 220-1).

Miriam's objection to the environmental feminists exists within a larger context. She continually ponders the question of determinism versus free will, especially in the form of social groups versus the individual. However often she acknowledges determining factors, however many groups enclose or attract her, Miriam always returns to her bias for free will and for the importance of the individual. "I must create my life," she says in The Trap. "Life is creation. Self and circumstances the raw material" (III Trap 508). One's response to the facts of one's situation, not the facts themselves is important. To this extent Miriam's many inconsistent remarks on the subject of the influence of environment resolve themselves into consistency.

Miriam is uncomfortable with primarily environmental explanations of life for two reasons. To consider the influence of environment, first of all, one must take into account all of the circumstances contributing to any situation. Most people do not agree with her on this point. In Honeycomb, for example, she listens to the men at the Corrie's table discussing the cause of an accident. One attributes it to the illness of a signalman. But when was he taken ill and what caused the illness? Miriam suggests that something he ate was responsible and blames the accident on the cook, who perhaps is incompetent because of her upbringing. Mr. Corrie thinks that Miriam has pushed the cause too far into the past. "'But the cause,' she persisted, in a low, anxious voice, 'is the sum total of all the circumstances'" and concludes angrily that one can go back into the past as well as "round and up and everywhere." One can understand nothing unless one embraces "things





as a whole" (I Hc 442-3).

Miriam's major objection, however, is the same as her objection to the assumptions of the environmental feminists. Explanations in terms of circumstances, unless perhaps such explanations include all the circumstances, do not account for one crucial factor: the unchanging, untouched inner life of the individual. Miriam admits to seeing a shape in history, but she insists that what goes on inside people remains fundamentally unaffected by it (III D1 169). She partially agrees with the socialists and with their stress on the influence of environment, but criticizes their ignorance of the "'more difficult deep-rooted individual things.'" Any change in society, she insists, must begin with a change in individual awareness (III RL 374-5). In The Trap, too, Miriam considers the extent to which people are influenced by what other people say and do. She admits that she, like other people, is influenced, but only temporarily. Always she remains certain "that underneath was something else, the same in everybody" (III Trap 429).

This pattern, to acknowledge the influence of environment and the importance of groups and then to return to her conviction that something inherent in each individual remains untouched by circumstances, governs Miriam's treatment of numerous issues. Two are relevant. Miriam wonders whether the differences between the sexes are inherent or due to circumstances. In Revolving Lights she concludes that the problem cannot be solved. Finding the sexes more sharply differentiated in England than in America, she asks herself whether the different stage in each country's development is responsible. She wonders whether the sexes in America are united by their effort to build up their country



and whether, as the task is accomplished, they will move apart as they have in England. "Ought men and women to modify each other . . . ?" she asks. "Or should they accentuate their natural differences? Were the differences natural?" (III RL 271). Shortly afterwards she decides that they are, because "otherwise environment is more than the human soul." Some inherent difference from women causes men to identify themselves wholly with their occupations and to lose touch with their individual, inner lives (III RL 280). Yet even this decision is not Miriam's final word on the subject. She decides that environment is not more than the human soul, but her overriding position is not that biological sex is more than the human soul. Her position is that, while men are inherently different from women in their world view, the difference is one of degree, not of kind. Everyone, whether biologically male or female, has a potential awareness of his individual, inner life. Men, because of some inherent tendencies, are less likely to acknowledge, develop, or value it.

The second relevant issue is the education of English women. Women are educated either according to men's views on education for men or according to men's views on education for women. An example of the first is the "scientific and 'aesthetic' way" of the Putney school where Miriam goes as a girl. Here girls are treated as if they have minds, but the school has little impact on most of them. Miriam decides that it had an impact on her because something in her responded to it (I PR 81-2). That something probably is the "masculine mind" she later realizes she has (III RL 236; III Trap 479). The other alternative is the finishing school where women are taught needlework and elocution and treated as mindless creatures (I PR 81). The school





where Miriam teaches in Germany as well as the Pernes' school in North London are of this sort. If the first kind of school leaves most of the girls untouched, the second fosters sentimentality, artificiality, hypocrisy, and ignorance. Miriam blames men for all of this "awfulness" in the external behavior of English women (III RL 379-80; II Tun 106). Both types of education that they have devised for women run counter to an awareness of the inner life, although both remain incapable of destroying it. Pilgrimage, by defining the feminine consciousness and feminine values, lays the foundation for a more appropriate educational environment. Woolf picks up the theme in Three Guineas with her proposal for a "poor college" without ceremonies, expensive buildings, degrees, or lectures, where women come because they want to learn, and where they learn not only academic subjects and art as traditionally defined, but also "the art of understanding other people's lives and minds, and the little arts of talk, of dress, of cookery that are allied with them" (GT 62). Woolf realizes, however, that such a college is a dream. Women need degrees in order to get jobs. Jobs result in the financial independence that enables women to express their opinions. The latter is Woolf's, and ultimately Richardson's, primary concern.

In spite of her impatience with its environmental emphasis, Miriam at times defends the suffrage movement even as carried on by the militant suffragettes. She is critical of the flattering, "'heavy-featured fat middle-aged American woman who doesn't smoke and thinks that voting would be unseemly for women'" (III D1 122). But she also is contemptuous of the woman who thinks she is as entitled to the vote as is her gardener, yet is unwilling to cause any unpleasantness to get it. Unpleasant agitation seems necessary to bring reforms about; pleasant





requests have no impact (IV DH 482-4).

Throughout her indirect relationship with the militant suffrage movement via her friend, Amabel, Miriam consistently emphasizes one additional point: the militants cannot be stereotyped as strange, unfeminine creatures with neither experience of nor qualifications for the traditional woman's role. Some of them are from those social classes with the strongest sense of tradition. Amabel, in fact, is converted to militancy "by the lacy, delicate old-fashioned ladyhood of Mrs. Despard" who, near the end of her life, sees the necessity of attacking the very conventions that have governed it (IV DLH 247;CH 344). Moreover, Miriam enthusiastically tells Hypo Wilson that the procession of suffragettes in which Amabel will march includes not only young, unmarried women, but also numerous wives, mothers, aunts, and grandmothers (IV CH 323). Amabel herself does not fit the stereotype of the suffragette either in appearance or in attitude. She is an extremely attractive woman and even plays the traditional charming, flattering feminine role to an extent that at times seems to Miriam incompatible with suffrage activities (IV CH 343).

Yet Amabel's refusal to imitate masculine ways of thinking and behaving in spite of her involvement with the militant suffragettes is one reason Miriam defends the movement. Amabel is not remade when she enters the world of group action; instead she brings to that world her own values and inner certainty. Marching in a suffrage parade, Amabel seems to Miriam

to invite all the world to march with her, to help and be helped. Certain in the way a man so rarely is certain, whole where he is divided, strong where he is weak. Deeply ensconced within her being, and therefore radiant. And it was she, and others here and there in the procession, particularly those the general public was not prepared for, matronly, middle-aged,



and obviously gentlewomen, who gave it the quality that shamed into so blessed a silence the pavement-scoffers and the gutter-wits; and who were so deliberately ignored by those of the newspaper men who still went on with their misrepresentations to support the policy of their employers. And it was the sight of Amabel and these others that brought so many male pedestrians to the point of overcoming their British self-consciousness and stepping into the roadway to march alongside (IV CH 345).

When Amabel is arrested, Miriam admires her willingness "to pay for effectively stating the desire and the right of women to help in the world's housekeeping" (IV CH 351). Her phrase, "the world's housekeeping," underscores again her emphasis on women bringing their own values into the larger world beyond the home. Even in the last section of Pilgrimage, when Amabel says that marriage and her son have caused her to lose interest in the movement, Miriam wants to remind her that her new situation does not disqualify her, that wives and mothers can and do remain active (IV MM 658).

Miriam is attracted by the militant movement so long as she sees it as a way, not of thinking and doing what men think and do, but of giving women's awareness of individual inner lives some expression and value in the larger society. She looks for a role for women to play there different from the alternatives outside the home presently available to them. Women presently out in the working world of men are treated as inferiors and made to conform to the values of that world. They contribute little of their own view of reality. Instead they must observe rigid rules governing behavior and dress (II Tun 161); in business they have little hope of advancement and therefore little future (II Tun 194); the dull routine of their "cut-and-dried employments" tends to characterize their private lives as well (IV CH 385-6). Any responsibility in the working world makes





cold, authoritative, ambitious, uncooperative "official" women of them (III Trap 412-13), or they assume the opposite pose of "'lady-pluckily-gone-into-business-and-isn't-it-fun-and-don't-I-do-it-charmingly'" (IV DH 426). The primary value Miriam sees in the women who have attained some measure of economic independence is the one Woolf emphasizes in A Room of One's Own, the courage some of them acquire to express their opinions (III D1 91).

Miriam's attitude toward the role of women in the larger world outside the home reflects, as usual, Richardson's. In an autobiographical sketch, she says that she returned from Germany "convinced that many of the evils besetting the world originated in the enclosed particularist home and in the institutions preparing women for such homes." She notes, moreover, that among the many voices she encountered in London were those of the warring politicians who agreed upon only one issue, the exclusion of women from "the national housekeeping."<sup>5</sup> Like Woolf in Three Guineas, Richardson wants to see women given some responsibility for the work of the world and opportunities to fulfill that responsibility by utilizing feminine insights and abilities. In a number of reviews of books on the position of women and in a series of letters-to-the-editor on the subject, Richardson affirms a socialist view of woman's role in society. Instead of being responsible to a single man, subject to his whims and eccentricities, victimized by any accidents that may befall him, a woman ought to be responsible to the larger society which, in turn, is responsible for her well-being and that of her children.<sup>6</sup> Such a relationship between women and the larger society implies that their insights, values, and abilities are acknowledged, that "wisdom, the ability to see," is no longer divorced from "the ability to do."



The domination of the former by the latter has not had admirable results. Richardson does not see women as the saviors of the world, but she does think that the world would benefit enormously from an influx of "the dynamic power that has been, so far, almost universally short-circuiting in the home."<sup>7</sup>

To Richardson, The Quakers are a microcosm of the larger society she envisions. Quaker women, she thinks, have succeeded in "making the world a home." In The Quakers Past and Present, published in 1914, Richardson compliments the Quakers for generally disregarding the traditional Christian view of women as inferior subordinates of men. The belief that the inner light is a possession of all people prompts the inclusion of women on an equal basis with men in the work of the Quaker society. The two sexes have equal voting power but, because women give primacy in their definition of reality to feeling and men to thought, their contributions differ. In a context where both definitions of reality are not only tolerated but encouraged, Quaker women are not tempted to imitate Quaker men. They do not take the opportunities given them to do the same jobs as the men because they have no need to prove that they can do what men do. Such a need arises only in reaction against virtual isolation from the larger world of activity beyond the home. Quaker women experience no such isolation. They contribute to the work of the society as women. To them "the world is home and home is the world, because . . . the inner is able without obstruction to flow out and realize itself in the outer."<sup>8</sup> To the extent that the suffrage movement represents an attempt to achieve such a situation, Richardson approves it. She sees value in even the most "womanly" of women being given responsibilities outside the home. Such a woman's





ability to see all viewpoints at once "will tend to make her within the council of nations what the Quaker is within the council of religions."<sup>9</sup>

Except among the Quakers, however, this kind of relationship between men and women is very little in evidence. In A Room of One's Own Woolf describes a trip to the British Museum to see what has been written on women. Her experience is anticipated by Miriam's in The Tunnel, reviewed by Woolf a decade earlier. Woolf is amazed at the numbers of books she finds and at the suppressed and disguised anger behind many of them. She becomes temporarily angry herself, especially at the continual assertions of "the mental, moral, and physical inferiority of women." Such assessments of her sex do not correspond to her sense of herself. Nor does the elevation of the male sex correspond to her experience of men (AR00 46-8). Similarly, Miriam, who looks up "women" in the index of her employer's encyclopedia, is enraged by the charges of women's mental, moral, and physical inferiority. Her anger, however, abates less quickly than Woolf's. Throughout most of the rest of Pilgrimage, she is preoccupied with turning the entire male value system upside down, with elevating as superior what has been deemed inferior, with redefining as virtues what have been considered vices, with recording everything the way it would have been recorded had women wielded the pens from the beginning. "If women had been the recorders of things from the beginning," she thinks, "it would all have been the other way round" (II Tun 251; cf III D1 218). To the men who have been the recorders she says essentially what William Blake said at the end of "The Everlasting Gospel" to the natural theologians of his day: "thou readst black where I read white." Miriam does not





believe that playing an inferior role has convinced women of their inferiority. It has made them hypocritical, frustrated, and lonely, but it has not made them apologetic. In their relationships with men they remain pitying rather than pitiable.



D. May Sinclair: The New Normality

"'. . .were there any possible prospect of woman's taking the social stand which some of them--poor, miserable, abortive creatures, who only dream of such things because they have missed woman's peculiar happiness, or because nature made them really neither man nor woman!--if there were a chance of their attaining the end which these petticoated monstrosities have in view, I would call upon my own sex to use its physical force. . .to scourge them back within their proper bounds!'"

Hollingsworth in Hawthorne's The Blithedale Romance (1852)

"But fight for your life, men. Fight your wife out of her own self-conscious preoccupation with herself. Batter her out of it till she's stunned. Drive her back into her own true mode. Rip all her nice superimposed modern-woman and wonderful-creature garb off her. Reduce her once more to a naked Eve, and send the apple flying."

D.H. Lawrence, Fantasia of the Unconscious (1923)

Like Woolf and Richardson, May Sinclair was very much aware of the women's suffrage movement. Just as Woolf's emphasis upon environment as the primary cause of differences between the sexes and Richardson's emphasis upon inherent factors ultimately are necessary to an understanding both of their treatment of the female artist in their fiction and their aesthetics, so Sinclair's balance between the two explanations is a prerequisite to further discussion. Like Woolf, although for somewhat different reasons, Sinclair experiences a conflict between her concern with women's status in society and her activities as an artist, but, like Richardson, she defends, with reservations, even the militants. In a letter to Votes for Women in 1908, Sinclair sets up a dichotomy between the woman novelist and the suffragette. "If I were not a mere novelist," she says, "I would be a Suffragette." As a novelist, however, self-interest prevents her from joining forces with the movement. She





thinks that the single woman novelist who earns her living by writing occupies a fairly secure position within society. Getting the vote even may jeopardize that position because then she must think about "unpeaceful questions" that never before concerned her, talk to canvassers, and compete for attention with the women entering politics. Such problems, however, are characteristic only of a transitional period. In the long run, the vote for women will prove valuable not only in society but in art. Both, Sinclair insists, need an injection of woman's spiritual values. If the twentieth century recaptures the spiritual certainty threatened by nineteenth-century materialism, it will do so because of women artists and women voters.<sup>1</sup>

Sinclair records her "whole-hearted sympathy with [the suffragettes] and with their aims,"<sup>2</sup> but she defends militancy only because she, like Richardson's Miriam, concludes that other less-violent methods have not worked. At the end of her pamphlet on feminism she states that she neither can defend nor condemn militancy. If violence is the only means to the end the militants seek, as seems to be the case, then history eventually will justify it (F 43).<sup>3</sup> She is careful, however, to define women's attitude toward violence as well as to define what the militants mean by the word. Women dislike committing violent acts, she says, even more than they dislike suffering from them. They have suffered from them repeatedly "before they could bring themselves to commit a technical assault upon a window." The violence of the militants, in other words, is mild compared to the violence women have endured through the ages. If they use it against men, they do so because men used it first against them. They behave defensively, not offensively, and the responsibility for their behavior ultimately must be assigned to the



political institutions that have necessitated it (F 44-6). Like Woolf, Sinclair invokes Antigone, albeit only in a final footnote. She notes Antigone's contrast between human laws and "'the unwritten and unswerving laws of God'" (F 46). Her implication is that while the militants may break the former, they do so to observe the latter.

Sinclair's major fictional treatment of the suffrage movement is in The Tree of Heaven (1917). Here sympathy with the aims of the movement is combined with a reluctance to relinquish one's individuality to it. Interested in the psychology behind the various manifestations of the movement and the various workers in it, Sinclair presents three different types of militant suffragettes. Maud Blackadder, with her appropriate name, is an ardent believer in the cause. She is a catalyst who whips up the emotions of potential women recruits and stings them into collective militant action. Women, she says, should want the vote badly enough to sacrifice everything for it, including any men who will not help them. She advocates fighting as a method and dismisses talking, writing, and thinking (TH 117-18). Rosalind Jervis is a second type of militant suffragette. Dorothea Harrison, a third type, pities Rosalind as someone with no inner volition who is motivated not by her own belief but by that of others. The leaders of the militant movement exploit her, and she mechanically imitates them (TH 123).

Dorothea Harrison, whose name sounds like a hybrid of "Dorothy Richardson" and "Miriam Henderson," is Sinclair's most complete and complex study of the suffragette and the one most likely to represent her own position. Dorothea has the inner strength that Rosalind does not have. She does not have, however, Maud's unquestioning faith in the



militant movement or in its leaders. She admires Maud, but questions her assumption that the suffrage group for which she is recruiter is united on the issues of both means and ends. Several of the suffragettes are uncomfortable with the idea that they will use "'every means in [their] power'" to gain their ends. Dorothea objects, moreover, to the exclusion of tongues, pens, and brains as weapons in the struggle. She also wonders whether the sacrifices they are asked to make will have the desired results. Maud's appeal is primarily emotional. Dorothea recommends a more calculated approach. Women who involve themselves ought to be clear, she thinks, as to what precisely will be required of them and what will be the consequences, both positive and negative, of their involvement (TH 119-20).

Dorothea's major disagreement with the militant movement revolves around the question of "'blind, unquestioning obedience'" to its leaders. Rosalind points out that the policy is "'to help, as far as they can, the object of the Union; to support the decisions of their leaders; to abstain from public and private criticism of those decisions and of any words or actions of their leaders; and to obey orders--not blindly or unquestioningly, but within the terms of their undertakings'" (TH 120). Dorothea cannot submit to such a policy. It represents a "Feminist Vortex" that both fascinates and repels her. She dislikes the herd of shrill, excited women who feel collectively, speak in movement clichés, and demand that she submerge her individual soul in mass action and emotion (TH 124; cf TH 225). She refuses to affiliate herself, therefore, with the movement. If she works for the freedom that the feminists want, she will do it in a way that does not require any loss





of her individual integrity (TH 126). If she wants to criticize the movement, she will do so. Moreover, she will use weapons other than fighting. When the violent activities of the Women's Franchise Union reach their peak, Dorothea, not surprisingly, is writing articles on economics and marriage laws (TH 232-3). Finally, she insists that she will go to prison if necessary, but only for a crime of her own choosing. She does so and, in her prison cell, sees the movement in a larger context. It appears to be a small part of a much more important struggle to come into contact with reality and thereby to attain freedom (TH 217-18).

The larger struggle for freedom becomes identified in The Tree of Heaven with World War I. The War, in fact, swallows up the activities of the suffrage movement (TH 299). Dorothea sees the extent to which the two are linked through her relationship with Frank Drayton. Drayton, who loves Dorothea but disapproves of the movement and her interest in it (TH 142-3;146), dies fighting. Initially, he does not understand the perspective she attains in prison. She discovers, however, that in his confrontation with danger and death he finally shared not only the reality they touched together in their passion for each other, but the reality she had experienced alone in her cell (TH 319). Sinclair repeatedly emphasizes the many ways in which reality is glimpsed through the temporal world, each of which is part of the struggle of mankind in general for freedom. Traditions that bind people to the temporal world or deny it altogether are equally imprisoning. When Dorothea regrets sacrificing the time she and Frank might have had together to "'that silly suffrage'" (TH 317), she juxtaposes the limited perspective of the suffragettes she knows to her broader one. Like Woolf and like



Richardson's Miriam she affirms love, not hate.

Sinclair is neither in the camp of those who hold traditional views of women nor in that of most feminists. The former tend to reduce women to bodies; the latter often elevate them to disembodied spirits or minds. The generalizations of neither are valid. Indeed, Sinclair seems convinced that generalizations about women beyond a certain minimal level are impossible. Her treatment of women in her fiction suggests as much. Examining relationships between men and women, within and without marriage, as well as relationships between mothers and their children from every conceivable angle, she discovers and presents infinite variations. Not all women, for example, want children, nor do they respond similarly to them once they are born. Her characterizations of men follow suit. Generalizations about their loves and commitments do not hold. Qualities and interests traditionally attributed to one sex are likely to appear in Sinclair's fiction as characteristic of either. "The Cosmopolitan," a story first published in 1901, is a good example. When Maurice Durant says that women are incapable of "a pure passion for Nature, a really disinterested love of life," and that a woman who loves nature does so only as a substitute for experiences she has been denied or has exhausted, Frida Tancred insists that every woman's loves and commitments are unique. Women differ in physical appearance and even more in soul (RP 257-8). Frida's own passion for nature and her love of life prove the falsity of Durant's generalization. In fact, he proves to be the one incapable of such disinterested enthusiasms.

Sinclair deals with the one generalization she accepts about women and men in an essay published in 1912 entitled "A Defence of Men."





Nature has marked women for the bearing of children and this biological fact has had certain consequences. She agrees with some of the feminists that man, "in matters of sex feeling and of sex morality. . . is different from and inferior to woman." She is uncertain about the extent to which the difference and the inferiority is a product of physiology and the extent to which it is a product of traditions established by society, but she concludes that so far the latter have followed the dictates of the former. Nature requires woman to bear children, and the product of her physical suffering and sacrifice, Sinclair thinks, is virtue. Men's sexual role requires the sacrifice not of their bodies but of their "spiritual prospects." Neither sex can blame the other for the consequences of what is a natural distinction.<sup>4</sup>

Sinclair writes this essay to defend men, however, from the feminists who would strip them of all virtues. The feminists, she points out, excuse woman's lack of productivity in art and science by saying that, due to Nature's designation of her as childbearer and to the social distinctions that have followed therefrom, "she hasn't been so long at it as man, and that circumstances have been against her." Sinclair neither agrees nor disagrees with this argument here. She is concerned with turning it back upon the feminists. They ought to excuse man's inferior sexual morality, she says, for the same reasons. His minimal role in the reproduction of the race has resulted in his designation as breadwinner, an occupation which consumes his time and does not foster spiritual development. Sinclair notes a certain contradiction, however, between man's inferior sexual morality and the fact that for ages he has been the creator of spiritual ideas and systems. He creates in an im-



material rather than in a material realm.<sup>5</sup> A further extension of this parallel suggests that the sacrifice and suffering accompanying mental creation gives man a spirituality which is denied to woman because of her inferior role in such enterprises. Therefore, if man is physically, if not mentally profligate, woman is the opposite: mentally, if not physically profligate.

In spite of her acknowledgment of Nature's laws, Sinclair questions the extent to which social traditions must follow from them. She allows for the reciprocal responsibility of both sexes in causing one another's weaknesses. "If we are what men have made us," she says, "men are, on the most favourable showing, what we have permitted them to be." The villains in the piece are ignorant, sentimental, servile Victorian women like Anne Majendie in Sinclair's The Helpmate.<sup>6</sup> Sinclair is convinced, however, that both women and men can overcome the limitations that have resulted from Nature's original division of labor. To the extent that the customs of society can be separated from Nature's laws, she sees the woman's movement as valuable in righting the wrongs in the relations between the sexes. Men can learn to exercise sexual morality from women, and women can learn from men to exercise their intellects.

Women, indeed, already have done much to counter their mental weaknesses. They have begun to obtain the knowledge necessary to the formation of opinions and have acquired both the courage to express those opinions and the desire for the political power necessary to put them into practice. The new knowledge women have acquired about themselves both as distinct individuals and as reproducers of the race will necessitate, in fact, the new sexual morality in men. The modern woman will not allow





male sexual profligacy because she now knows that his habits have a bearing upon his health, her health, and the health of the children she bears.<sup>7</sup> Sinclair sees Anne Brontë's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall as prophetic of such a situation. The heroine of that novel, however priggish, boring, and destructive she may be, confronts and revolts against all of the written and unwritten laws that require a woman to be obedient to her husband no matter how much she disapproves of his values and behavior. Anne Brontë's book, Sinclair says, is "the first attempt in the mid-Victorian novel to handle the relations of a revolting wife to a most revolting husband with anything approaching to a bold sincerity."<sup>8</sup> Similarly Vera Walters in Sinclair's own short story, "Appearances" (1911), refuses to marry Oscar Thesiger because she thinks he may have contact with women of doubtful reputation and thus may jeopardize the health and happiness of her future children. She is wrong about Oscar, but the fact that she should even think along such lines amazes him. Such a woman is quite different from Aggie Purcell in Sinclair's The Judgment of Eve (1908). Aggie's husband's morality is not in question, but both of their ignorance about reproduction, health, and family planning is. Seven consecutive children and the exhaustion and financial strain that result cause Aggie's death. One of the first uses to which woman must put her increasing mental vitality, according to Sinclair, is the preservation of her own health, that of those she loves, and that of mankind in general.

In the same year as "A Defence of Man," Sinclair wrote for the Women Writers' Suffrage League a pamphlet entitled "Feminism." The pamphlet is a response to the denunciation of the suffrage movement by Sir Almroth Wright, a medical man whose name she mentions in the





other essay. Wright denounces the women participating in the movement as sexually frustrated, neurotic, hysterical, and degenerate. Sinclair admits that, like all large groups, the suffragettes include among their numbers some unstable women, but she charges Wright with basing his conclusions upon an insufficient and badly-selected sample. She insists that he look at the leaders of the movement (F 6-7). She asks him, moreover, as Richardson's Miriam asks Hypo Wilson, to observe the large number of wives and mothers in the suffrage societies. To attribute the movement to disappointment in love and to sexual frustration, she insists, is a mistake, but one to be expected from a man who sees woman "as nothing but a bundle of 'physiological emergencies'" (F 15). Sinclair objects to the tendency of doctors to reduce woman to her sexual functions. Nature may have designated her as childbearer and formed her somewhat differently for that purpose, but Sinclair insists, "she is not all body any more than a man is; and. . .even for her, there are other things" (F 29).<sup>9</sup>

Wright argues, Sinclair says, "as if all women (and men, too) in whom the sexual instincts are not conspicuous and dominant were necessarily incomplete; whereas they very often are the most complete types of all, as possessing that Will the existence of which Sir Almroth Wright either denies or ignores" (F 12). She disputes his view that women are in an either-or situation, that either they must conform to the traditional pattern of marriage and motherhood or court neurosis, hysteria, and degeneracy. He does not see that normal women, like men, can and do channel their "Life-Force" in other worthwhile directions. Sinclair thinks, in fact, that a good portion of the world's art can be explained in this way. Wright does not see, moreover, that pursuing



other activities need not preclude normal sexual functioning. (F 30-3).

In her pamphlet on feminism, Sinclair does not use the word "sublimation." Four years later, however, in 1916, she gives specific attention to it in a two-part article entitled "Symbolism and Sublimation." This article, which actually is a review of Jung's Psychology of the Unconscious, indicates her familiarity with the works of several psychoanalysts and, more importantly, her assessments of them.<sup>10</sup> Early in the article she defines sublimation as "the conscious direction of the libido into higher channels." She uses the word "libido" in various ways, depending upon which psychoanalyst's theories she discusses. On the whole, however, she uses it in a sense more general than Freud's and equates it with the Life-Force she mentions in "Feminism."<sup>11</sup> She says in a footnote that she uses the word "in Jung's sense of creative energy, in which it is equivalent to the 'will to live' of Schopenhauer and von Hartmann, the 'need' or 'want' of Samuel Butler, [and] the 'life-force' or 'elan vital' of Bergson. . . ."<sup>12</sup>

As in "Feminism," Sinclair rejects an either-or position. She does not agree with those who interpret psychoanalytical works to mean that "the indestructible libido must either ramp outrageously in the open or burrow beneath us and undermine our sanity." Psychoanalysts, she insists, offer sublimation as a positive alternative to license or repression.<sup>13</sup> Sublimation, however, does not mean the mere transferring of libido from one channel into another. Some kind of hierarchy exists. In the cases of metaphysics and art, for example, "it is not enough to transfer; you must transform." She objects to Jung's work because he handles metaphysics and art as if they did not differ from primitive myths, as if the Upanishads and the Psalms did not differ from Miss





Miller, the subject of the case studies with which Jung begins his book. In the cases of metaphysics and art, one must deal with sublimations of sublimations and symbols of symbols as the human intellect operates again and again upon the same concepts.<sup>14</sup> On the whole, however, Sinclair approves of Jung's book, especially the last chapters, in which he defines sublimation as the goal of mankind and associates it with the self and its struggle for freedom. That struggle ceases momentarily when ultimate reality is glimpsed in one of several ways in the temporal world.<sup>15</sup>

The artist, according to Sinclair's view, is one who transforms his or her libido into a higher form. She views this transformation as normal. Such a view is important for an understanding of her treatment of the female artist. The notion that women who join the suffrage movement are sexually frustrated, neurotic, and even depraved often is the view taken of women who pursue an artistic career. Neville Tyson in Sinclair's The Tysons (1906), for example, says that if a woman is a genius it means "'either devilry or disease.'"<sup>16</sup> Henry Brodrick, doctor and brother-in-law of the novelist, Jane Holland Brodrick, in The Creators (1910), holds a similar opinion. He considers all artists neurotic, but he is particularly intolerant of women artists. For women normality means motherhood. He approves of Jane only during the periods of her married life when she devotes herself to a new born child.

His view of her as an interesting abnormality is one to which Jane is accustomed. The attitude annoys her, but becomes particularly distressing when her husband adopts it. The most serious consequences of the definition of Jane as abnormal occur after the birth of her second



child. Henry Brodrick intimates that it is highstrung and weak because the temperamental Jane worked herself into a nervous state over a book during her pregnancy. Owen Prothero, the poet who also is a doctor, questions both her neuroticism and the charge that she is the hereditary source of the baby's condition. The sensitivity of the artist's nerves does not imply neuroticism. Moreover, almost all of the Brodricks, however infrequently they admit it, suffer from nervous disorders. Jane is furious with the Brodrick family and cannot forgive them for the fear and guilt they have made her endure by herself. "'If you can't have genius without neurosis,'" she declares in her exasperation, "'give me neurosis'" (C 421).

According to Sinclair's interpretation of sublimation, it is as normal for a woman to want to write novels as it is for her to want to marry and bear children. Moreover, doing the former need not preclude the latter. The desire to fulfill herself in more than one way creates the most severe problems for the female artist. Jane Holland tries to explain to her husband the way in which her energies are channeled in both directions. She points out that she reacts to the production of a book much as she reacts to the production of a baby and that, in both cases, her reactions are quite normal. The joy of being in love is much like the joy of creating a work of art. When either a book or a baby is taking shape, periods of restlessness and nervousness occur. Peace arrives only when it finally does take shape. A flawed book is to her as much of a disaster as would be the birth of a deformed child (C 272, 326, 292).

Sinclair's essays on women's situation and her related forays into the writings of the psychoanalysts are both products of her reaction



against generalizations about women that reduce them to either reproducers of the race or to neurotics. Other normal alternatives are open to them. She considers equally mistaken, however, the notion that all women want to pursue alternate activities or are potential geniuses only waiting to be given a chance to develop. The feminists who concern themselves with women's education react against the reduction of women to bodies, but they often present an equally limited view of women as minds. The geniuses who do exist among women, Sinclair thinks, usually make their way no matter what their circumstances. Adverse conditions resulting from the traditional female role of wife and mother can keep them from reaching their full potential, but they cannot be held back altogether. Most women, however, have average talents and intellects. Sinclair sees the suffrage movement as primarily for them. Like Aggie Purcell in The Judgment of Eve and Mattie Fenwick in The Rector of Wyck, the abilities of such women find no outlets beyond the traditional home. Their enthusiasms either are crushed or are corrupted into various forms of sentimentality and hypocrisy.<sup>17</sup> Some women, moreover, have below-average intellects. These women Sinclair sees as the casualties of the suffrage movement. Forced into the same mold as those better equipped, they suffer physical and psychological breakdowns. This group is the one doctors see, and from it they draw their conclusions about suffragettes and about women in general. What they see, however, is "artificial," not "natural" intellect (F 22).

In Superseded (1901) Sinclair examines the consequences of this assumption that all women are equally capable of intellectual achievements, equally willing to develop their minds at the expense of their bodies, and equally desirous of a role outside the traditional home.





She contrasts two women, Miss Quincey and Rhoda Vivian. Miss Quincey, who for twenty-five years has been a mathematics teacher at St. Sidwell's, Miss Cursiter's school for girls, is about to be "superseded." Miss Cursiter slowly replaces such older, enervated workhorses who must teach to earn their livings with younger, vital feminists who, with missionary zeal, choose to prepare girls for a new, prominent role in society. Miss Quincey is one of the "artificial" intellectuals who tries but cannot compete with "natural" intellectuals, perhaps even geniuses, like Rhoda, the young, beautiful, bright, enthusiastic, and successful classics teacher. Presumably the enormous difference between these two teachers reflects similar differences among the students they teach. The question raised is how any generalization about women's intellects and any one program of education can encompass such diversity.

The novel contains a doctor who treats Miss Quincey after her collapse and comments on the situation. Somewhat more perceptive than the doctor whom Sinclair denounces in "Feminism," Bastian Cautley denounces "civilization, the social order, women's education and women's labour, the system that threw open all doors to them, and let them be squeezed and trampled down together in the crush" (S 89). Acknowledging the necessity of opportunities for women to earn a living, he nevertheless protests against an educational system that either sacrifices the geniuses among women to the imbeciles, or vice versa (S 91; 98). He insists that, instead of representing increasing civilization, St. Sidwell's resembles the primitive struggle for survival, but without its few advantages. Those who survive are not necessarily those who are intellectually most fit. Rather, they are "' monstrosities,' " brains without bodies. Women like Rhoda Vivian, Cautley says, are not produced by



schools like St. Sidwell's. Women like Rhoda, mistakenly assuming that all women are like themselves, found such schools (S 92-3).

Sinclair's view on the subject, while similar in some respects, must not be identified with Cautley's. In love with Rhoda, his interpretation of the situation clearly is biased. Moreover, disillusioned to such an extent that he sees neurosis everywhere, Cautley is revitalized by Rhoda, whose health and vitality seem to him "the supreme expression of Nature's will to live" (S 96). Like Sir Almroth Wright, however, he tends to define the situation for all women as either marriage and motherhood or neurosis. He does not associate Nature's will to live in Rhoda with her intellect, with any form of sublimation, but with her potential wife and motherhood (S 100). Like Wright, too, Cautley ignores the largest group of women, those who are neither geniuses nor imbeciles, but who have average intellects and talents some development of which might be combined with marriage and motherhood.

Rhoda, sympathetic with Miss Quincey's situation and receptive to Dr. Cautley's criticisms of St. Sidwell's, takes a view of the issue slightly different from his. Her emphasis is on the transitional period in which women find themselves. Any changes in their situation must be made slowly, with less arid idealism and, as Cautley says, more consideration on the part of educators for the individual women involved. Rhoda realizes that for every winner in the intellectual race she runs with so much exhilaration and success, numerous losers exist. When Miss Cursiter denounces woman's past and affirms woman's future, therefore, Rhoda points out that this future is nowhere in sight. "'We're in all the muddle of the middle,'" she says (S 147). She insists that the relics of woman's past, like Miss Quincey, ought to be provided for if





they must be superseded. Like Dorothea Harrison in The Tree of Heaven, she maintains that if the door is to be opened wider for women, they ought to know what is on the other side. Otherwise this generation may "'hand over worse incompetents than Miss Quincey to the next generation,'" a multitude of women who have tried to develop their minds and have neglected their bodies (S 152).

Sinclair, therefore, sees the suffrage movement both as valuable and as dangerous. She does not condemn its violent manifestations because they are defensive, not offensive and because they are relatively mild. The demands of some factions of the movement, however, for the relinquishment of thought, talk, and the printed word as weapons in the struggle and for the submergence of individuality in unquestioning mass emotion and action are suspect. She thinks the suffrage movement can and should encourage, not discourage women to use their intellects. Just as men are not bound by Nature's division of labor in the matter of reproduction to be deficient in virtue, so women are not bound to be deficient in intellect. Women need opportunities to obtain knowledge, courage as well as ways to express their values in the larger society, and some power to act according to the opinions their knowledge has helped them to form. They also, however, need perspective. They need to know exactly what individual women can expect in a transitional period when woman's situation is changing. They need to see the suffrage movement, not in isolation but as one manifestation of the larger human struggle to define reality, to attain the freedom that is dependent, in Sinclair's thought, upon such a definition. If the assumption that women are merely bodies good for reproducing the race is mistaken, however, so is the assumption too often governing the educational systems



designed to prepare women for a more important role in the larger society. Not all women have great undeveloped intellectual potential. They are vastly different in their abilities and commitments. Marriage and motherhood or neurosis are not their only alternatives. Nor are marriage and motherhood precluded by the numerous other directions into which their energies can be channeled. The definition of what is normal for a woman must be extended considerably.



E. "Can't Paint, Can't Write":  
Virginia Woolf's Lily Briscoe and Orlando

"'Was the Fifth Symphony written by a woman? Was the object of your Aunt's worship, Richard Wagner, a female?' he snarled. 'By no means! Where are their great works--their mighty symphonies, their great paintings, their epic poetry? . . . Is the gigantic work upon the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel the product of a woman's genius?--Say! did you ever hear of a lady by the name of William Shakespeare? Was it a female of that name who wrote King Lear? Are you familiar with the works of a nice young lady named John Milton? Or Fraulein Goethe, a sweet German girl?' he sneered. 'Perhaps you have been edified by the writings of Mademoiselle Voltaire or Miss Jonathan Swift? Phuh! Phuh! Phuh! Phuh! Phuh!'"  
Bascom Pentland in Thomas Wolfe's Of Time and the River (1935)

Virginia Woolf fully realizes that male artists have problems to face. As early as 1905 she notes that civilized English society neither understands the artist nor considers him sufficiently masculine in his values and behavior. It views with scorn, suspicion, or fear his expression of certain ideas and feelings that are better repressed. In a practical society, for this as well as for economic reasons, parents do not wish their sons to be poets, painters, or especially musicians.<sup>1</sup> Such an attitude is exhibited in The Voyage Out by Terence Hewet's mother who "'thought music wasn't manly for boys'" and preferred that Terence "'kill rats and birds.'"<sup>2</sup> It also is reflected in Night and Day by the prevailing disapproval of Katharine Hilbery's cousin, Henry, who prefers practising his music to pursuing a career in commerce.

By 1929, when A Room of One's Own appeared, however, Woolf had decided that the problems a male artist encounters in his contacts with society are multiplied for the female artist. If, for example,





the male artist finds money and privacy difficult to obtain, the female artist finds them even more elusive. Moreover, if the public ignores the male artist and even treats him occasionally with contempt or suspicion, it greets the female artist with overt hostility. The world most frequently says to the male artist, "write if you choose; it makes no difference to me." To the female artist, however, it says "with a guffaw, Write? What's the good of your writing?" The world laughs and questions the value of a woman's writing because it is of the opinion that women are intellectually inferior to men and suited only to be their dependents and servants. Woolf concludes that "it is time. . .the effect of discouragement upon the mind of the artist. . . be measured." Such a climate of negative opinion "must have lowered [the female artist's] vitality, and told profoundly upon her work," since she continually must defend herself against charges of incapacity. Even as late as the nineteenth century, Woolf notes, women artists received little encouragement and considerable overt discouragement. She counters those who argue that the artist should assume an aloof position and ignore such opinions by insisting that "it is precisely the men or women of genius who mind most what is said of them" (AROO 78-85).

Most of the problems confronted by the female artist as Woolf sees her are related to the public denigration of her potential and to the limitations and conflicting demands placed upon her. A Room of One's Own reveals the great extent to which Woolf thinks the female artist's situation to be dependent not so much upon physical and biological characteristics as upon male-dominated social traditions. She expresses her convictions on this subject on several other occasions. In 1920, for example, she rejects the notion that genius, if present, will tri-



umph inevitably over whatever obstacles society may place in its path. She maintains, instead, that women have not produced great art because they have been limited to producing children and because they have been barred from education, experience, and sufficient independence to allow them to have the courage of their convictions.<sup>3</sup> Her A Room of One's Own caused a flurry of letters to the editor on the subject of women's artistic potential. Woolf defends her position against one such writer by insisting that men denied encouragement, education, money, and opportunity, would have been equally unproductive in the arts.<sup>4</sup>

Implicit in her comments is the idea that women have had to choose between being women as society defines them and being artists. As a number of Woolf's predecessors observe, if a woman fulfills all of the demands and accepts all of the limitations which society traditionally places upon her, then the artist has little chance to flourish. In this context, Woolf notes that the four major female novelists of nineteenth-century England, Jane Austen, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, and George Eliot, were childless and that only two of them were married (CE II 143). She notes, too, the case of Ellen Terry, who, unable to ignore the "voice of her genius," left her family and returned to the hardships and rewards of the stage (CE IV 70). Woolf actually treats the problem of the choice between woman and artist with more insight in her novels than she does in her essays. Ultimately she does not suggest that the female artist deny the woman. She suggests that woman be redefined to encompass more alternatives.





To the Lighthouse

Woolf's comments in A Room of One's Own and elsewhere on the problems of the female artist are relatively well-known. Less generally recognized is the extent to which she dramatizes and even amplifies those problems in her fiction. In several of her novels, female artists struggle with art forms created by men within a society dominated by masculine values. Lily Briscoe in To the Lighthouse is the most striking example. A number of critics far too naively dismiss her as a bad or uncommitted painter.<sup>5</sup> Ignorance of her feelings of inferiority, their causes, and their effects has led to distorted readings both of Lily Briscoe as a character and of the novel as a whole. The few critics who take her seriously as an artist virtually ignore the social context which is so essential in evaluating Lily's role as an artist and thus misread the relationship between Lily and Mrs. Ramsay. Critics more aware of the social context do not explore fully the relationship between Woolf's variety of feminism and the situation of the female artists in her fiction.<sup>6</sup>

Woolf always places her artist-characters firmly within a social context. As the mocking biographer-narrator in Orlando notes, genius "resembles the lighthouse in its working, which sends one ray and then no more for a time; save that genius is much more capricious in its manifestations and may flash six or seven beams in quick succession. . . and then lapse into darkness for a year or for ever. To steer by its beams is therefore impossible, and when the dark spell is on them men of genius are, it is said, much like other people" (O 188). This likeness of the artist to other people creates certain confusions among them,



one result of which is a reluctance to grant men of genius the conditions necessary to their work. If the artist is a woman, the reluctance is even greater, combined as it is with a certainty that she is incapable of producing anything significant.

Any attempt to include the social context in a consideration of Lily Briscoe as a female artist rests not upon an examination of external data but upon a consideration of point of view in the novel itself. Mitchell Leaska accurately calls To the Lighthouse a "multiple-point-of-view novel." Such a novel requires that reader and critic confront the simultaneous reliability and unreliability of several viewpoints, the way each amplifies and qualifies the others. If a reader or critic adopts the attitude of a single biased character with whom he sympathizes, bases his interpretation upon it, and ignores other attitudes which complicate or invalidate the picture, then he will misread the novel.<sup>7</sup> Multiplicity in point of view, however, exists in the novel in more complex ways. Woolf's characters do not just perceive each other; they also perceive each other's perceptions and compare them with their own.<sup>8</sup> Lily Briscoe's view of William Bankes's present and past views of Mrs. Ramsay is one example (L 77-9). Woolf's characters also constantly imagine how others perceive them. Mrs. Ramsay's view of Lily and Lily's of Mrs. Ramsay, for example, are complicated by Lily's view of Mrs. Ramsay's view of Lily. In Lily's mind arise parenthetical observations such as "(but Mrs. Ramsay cared not a fig for her painting)" (L 80) and "(Oh, she's thinking we're going to get married...)" (L 115). Woolf modifies the old saying, "If we could see ourselves as others sees us, it would from many a foolish fancy free us." Just as



often the foolish fancy is the other's perception. The fact that her characters often consider themselves misunderstood does not prevent them from misunderstanding others. Lily Briscoe ultimately is the only one who comes to terms with this irony.

In To the Lighthouse the climate of opinion about the artistic potential of women is embodied in Charles Tansley. Woolf makes clear that his words, "Women can't paint, can't write," tell us more about him than about female artists; nevertheless, his taunt echoes in Lily's mind throughout the book. Tansley is contemptuous not only of female artists but of women in general. Fuming about the "rot" talked at the Ramsay's table, he concludes that "it was the women's fault. Women made civilization impossible with all their 'charm,' all their silliness" (L 133-4). His attitude toward women is, however, defensive. He despises them because, lonely and self-conscious about his inadequate clothes and manners, he thinks that they despise him. He is rude to Lily, for example, because he thinks she lies to him and laughs at him when she asks him to take her to the lighthouse (L 135). If Lily lies, she does so because she resents his dismissal of female artists and dislikes the hypocrisy the feminine social role demands. Female artists and even women in general, however, are not Tansley's only targets. He is insecure with most people and defends himself by denigrating them. In Mrs. Ramsay's thoughts he is "the atheist Tansley" who is mocked by her children and disliked most because of his tendency to twist everything everyone says until he looks superior and they look inferior (L 14-18). Lily perceives the insecurities behind Tansley's attitude toward female artists, but she still is affected by it. In spite of what she tells herself about his needs, she feels "her whole being bow, like corn





under a wind, and erect itself again from this abasement only with a great and rather painful effort" (L 134-5). In this context Lily's self-depreciating attitude is understandable. Hers is a not-wholly-reliable point of view, at least to the extent that she is able to judge herself and her art impartially.

Her fears about what other people think of her painting indicate extreme self-consciousness. She is afraid that Mr. Ramsay will look at her canvas on one of his waving, shouting sweeps past her spot on the lawn. "Even while she looked at the mass, at the line, at the colour, at Mrs. Ramsay sitting in the window with James," we are told, "she kept a feeler on her surroundings lest some one should creep up, and suddenly she should find her picture looked at" (L 32). All of her attention is not focused on her art. She allows only William Bankes to look. Yet she judges the picture she lets him see, "infinitely bad!" (L 78). To Bankes she confesses some of her dissatisfaction with her work. When he tries to console her, she utters a "little insincerity." She tosses off the remark that "she would always go on painting, because it interested her" (L 114). Whether the word "insincerity" is the narrator's insertion or Lily's own realization is difficult to determine. The latter seems most likely in the context. Lily is not insincere about continuing to paint, whatever Tansley says. The statement that she has a recurrent vision of Mrs. Ramsay no matter where she happens to be painting (L 279) suggests relatively continual artistic activity. Moreover, when Lily returns to the Ramsays' summer home ten years after the visit described in Part I, she brings, seemingly as a matter of course, her painting equipment. Lily is insincere, however, when she says that painting merely "interests" her. Such a remark suggests the



female artist who is afraid to draw attention to herself or to expose herself to ridicule by revealing too much commitment to her work. She prefers to hide from intense scrutiny and possible negative criticism behind a facade of amateurism and dilettantism. She minimizes her commitment even to William Bankes, one of the few to whom she has the courage to explain the intentions behind the painting upon which she works.

Even in Part III, Lily experiences "a few moments of nakedness" before she begins to paint. She does not know if she should attribute such moments to what she calls "her nature," that is to say to her individual personality and temperament, or to "her sex." Or, we obviously might add, to the attitudes toward her sex she constantly must struggle not to adopt. In these few moments, Lily is "exposed without protection to all the blasts of doubt":

Why then did she do it? She looked at the canvas, lightly scored with running lines. It would be hung in the servants' bedrooms. It would be rolled up and stuffed under a sofa. What was the good of doing it then, and she heard some voice saying she couldn't paint, saying she couldn't create, as if she were caught up in one of those habitual currents which after a certain time forms experience in the mind, so that one repeats words without being aware any longer who originally spoke them.

Can't paint, can't write, she murmured monotonously, anxiously considering what her plan of attack should be (L 245).

She does manage on this occasion to forget everything but her work. Nevertheless, her mind produces again the words, "women can't paint, can't write," that Tansley said to her a decade ago (L 246-7).

Lily, however, has matured since then. Sensitive as she is to the idea that Tansley has implanted in her mind, she no longer specifically resents him. She thinks parenthetically that "(the war had drawn the sting of her femininity. Poor devils, one thought, poor devils, of both sexes. . .)" (L 247). Lily is less sex-conscious and more conscious





of the human condition in general, less conscious of differences, more conscious of similarities between the sexes, less angry about unjust opinions of women, more aware of universal injustices. Everyone has feelings of inferiority and as a result exploits and distorts other people. Recalling a lecture on brotherly love she heard Tansley give during the war, she wonders how he can speak on such a topic when he knows nothing of painting and, in addition, needs to dismiss female artists as inferior. At this point in her life, however, Lily admits that Tansley has some admirable qualities. She realizes that, just as he distorts the image of women artists for purposes of his own, so she distorts his image. He is for her something of a scapegoat. She concludes that her image of him and one's images of other people in general are "grotesque" (L 302-3). While her view of Tansley is by no means complete, it at least has increased in complexity.

To whatever extent Tansley embodies Lily's own self-doubts, Woolf's characterization of Lily reveals that opinions such as his are, at least in part, the causes of such self-doubts. The circle is vicious. Tansley's insecurity about himself, particularly around women, results in his need to stand superior as a member of the male intelligentsia. His attitude and that of the larger society it represents provide an obstacle for Lily to overcome if she is to lose her self-consciousness and concentrate on her art. In the event of failure, of course, the attitude provides a rationale of resignation or of hostility which serves to explain and excuse that failure. Lily breaks free of the circle to the extent that she can think of Tansley without anger and resentment and to the extent that she can, at moments at least, see herself not as a



woman trying to paint but as a painter trying to express something fundamental about the human condition.

Lily's feelings of inferiority also are due to Mrs. Ramsay. Tansley's words, "women can't paint, can't write," are inscribed upon one side of the coin perpetually spinning on edge in Lily's brain. Mrs. Ramsay's words, "Marry, marry!" (L 269) are inscribed upon the other. The attitude Tansley expresses negatively, Mrs. Ramsay expresses positively. Women should not devote themselves to art because, in this sphere of creative activity, they have no potential; women should devote themselves to husband, children, and other people because, in this sphere of creative activity, they do have ability. By embodying these two inseparable aspects of the prevailing attitude toward the female artist in two separate characters, and by showing the reverberations within the mind of a particular female artist, Woolf reveals the major obstacles such an artist confronts. Her presentation of Lily Briscoe in no way suggests that, because she is a woman and supposedly unable to paint, she ought to marry. She suggests, instead, that because everyone, including all-too-often Lily herself, appears to believe that she cannot paint and must marry, she indeed does have more trouble painting than she otherwise might have, and she is attracted by Mrs. Ramsay's kind of existence which at times seems to her richer than her own. If female artists believe in their inadequacy as women because they are artists, they are likely to be inadequate as both. They cannot lose consciousness of their doubts about themselves; they cannot direct all of their best energies toward their art; most importantly, they hesitate to accept alternate roles for women. Far from denigrating Lily Briscoe in comparison to Mrs. Ramsay,<sup>9</sup> Woolf suggests intermediate roles for women in which they



have meaningful relationships without sacrificing themselves to others so completely that they have no time or energy to devote either to art or to other interests.

Far from idealizing Mrs. Ramsay,<sup>10</sup> Woolf suggests the extent to which that woman's view of the female role is limited, if not obsolete. The situation of women in To the Lighthouse is a transitional one. The novel begins with a contrast between Mrs. Ramsay's attitude toward sex roles and that of her daughters. The narrative voice tries to articulate what Mrs. Ramsay cannot; it notes her protective attitude toward men not only because she admires their skills and accomplishments, but because she senses their reverence for her (L 15). Mrs. Ramsay's three daughters, however, entertain, along with some nostalgia for Woman as represented by their mother,

infidel ideas which they had brewed for themselves of a life different from hers; in Paris, perhaps; a wilder life; not always taking care of some man or other; for there was in all their minds a mute questioning of deference and chivalry, of the Bank of England and the Indian Empire, of ringed fingers and lace, though to them all there was something in this of the essence of beauty, which called out the manliness in their girlish hearts, and made them, as they sat at table beneath their mother's eyes, honour her strange severity, her extreme courtesy. . . (L 16).

Mrs. Ramsay's protective attitude toward the male sex is precisely the attitude Woolf later denounces in her essays. In A Room of One's Own, she discusses male dislike of female criticism and notes that "women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size." Man needs this inflated reflection of himself if he is to hand down judgments, extend the empire, and produce laws, books, and speeches (AROO 53-55). Similarly in Three Guineas, which appeared a decade after





To the Lighthouse, Woolf equates men dependent upon the excited approval of women with little boys blowing trumpets outside the window. If they receive no notice, men will stop their exhibitions of warlike courage just as little boys stop their noise (TG 198). Women like Mrs. Ramsay who are protective and admiring of the military, political, and intellectual exploits of men perpetuate the violence, injustice, and inhumanity rampant in both the private world of the home and the public world of the nation.

Uncritical female deference and the male chivalry which is its counterpart also influence art. The productions of the female artist especially are endangered. Mrs. Ramsay is a toned-down and humanized version of that dangerous phantom, "The Angel in the House," whom Woolf describes in "Professions for Women" (CE II 285-6). Like the Angel in the House, Mrs. Ramsay tries to enlist Lily's aid in flattering and admiring men. If Lily adopts this attitude, she never will have the time, energy, or courage to express her own vision in her own way. Mrs. Ramsay thus functions in part as the particular phantom whose influence Lily carefully must evaluate before she can function as an artist.<sup>11</sup>

The deference and chivalry and the obsession with marriage which comprise Mrs. Ramsay's view of the world are questioned in the novel not only by Mrs. Ramsay's daughters. Mrs. Ramsay doubts every one of her views herself. In this transitional period in which her view of the world is challenged she is, like Lily Briscoe, insecure and defensive. Mrs. Ramsay, however, is older than Lily, in the position of looking back and asking, "But what have I done with my life?" She experiences at times "a sense of being past everything, through everything, out of everything" (L 130). Unable to change her life any more, she understandably must



justify it to herself. She does so by quelling her doubts when they arise and by imposing her values on other people.

However much she reverences her husband and devalues herself, she has disconcerting moments when she doubts his superiority. So disconcerting are such moments that the narrative voice, not Mrs. Ramsay, puts her vague dissatisfactions into words:

. . .she did not like, even for a second, to feel finer than her husband; and further, could not bear not being entirely sure, when she spoke to him, of the truth of what she said. Universities and people wanting him, lectures and books and their being of the highest importance--all that she did not doubt for a moment; but it was their relation, and his coming to her like that, openly, so that anyone could see, that discomposed her; for then people said he depended on her, when they must know that of the two he was infinitely the more important, and what she gave the world, in comparison with what he gave, negligible (L 65).

She does not like to feel that her husband is emotionally dependent upon her, nor does she like others to notice it. Her discomposure takes her one step further when someone raises the question of literary immortality. She knows that Mr. Ramsay will begin to worry about his. With relief she predicts that Minta Doyle will praise him and banish his doubts. Nevertheless she wishes that such praise were unnecessary and wonders if "perhaps it was her fault that it was necessary" (L 166-7). The thought occurs to her, in other words, that she has created in her husband this need for sympathy and praise and thus weakened him in her eyes and in the eyes of others, perhaps weakened him in general. She has created this dependency and lessened her joy in their relationship primarily by hiding her opinions from him (L 65).

Mrs. Ramsay's desire to think her husband superior to her is complemented by his desire to think her inferior to him. His attitude toward women is similar, in some respects, to Tansley's. Mr. Ramsay's admiration





for his wife's beauty is accompanied by a condescending attitude toward her intellect, as his response to the sight of her reading a book indicates. The novel suggests, however, that Mrs. Ramsay merely is knowledgeable in a different way from Mr. Ramsay. The contrast between their choices of reading matter and their responses to what they read is one indication. She chooses poetry. Immersing herself entirely in it, she responds to the rhythm, the sound, the colors suggested by the words rather than to their meanings and is rested, purified, put into touch with something essential. He, on the other hand, chooses a Scott novel and, although he loses himself in his reading, cannot entirely suspend his judgment. His reading invigorates rather than rests him (L 183-9). Woolf presents both of their reading experiences, however, as positive and meaningful.

Sometimes Mr. Ramsay's condescension shades into contempt. He scorns his wife's lack of attention to facts. During their interchange early in the novel about the possibility of visiting the lighthouse on the following day, Mr. Ramsay is enraged by "the extraordinary irrationality" of Mrs. Ramsay's optimism about the weather and by "the folly of women's minds" in general, by the way they fly "in the face of facts," create false hopes, and lie (L 53-4). Mrs. Ramsay continually exaggerates, it is true. She does so, however, not so much because she believes her exaggerations as because she instinctively tries to create an atmosphere of heightened anticipation or sympathy or gaiety for those around her. Human feelings take precedence over practicality. Even the masculine intelligence manifests itself at her dinner table only after she creates the proper atmosphere. Mrs. Ramsay admires the



masculine display of knowledge that she does not possess. Nevertheless, she seats Paul Rayley beside her because he is less an arid intellectual than any of the others. Moreover, her sensitivity to the problems of the male ego enables her to distinguish false displays of learning from true ones. Tansley, she realizes, does not know what he is talking about; he merely needs to assert himself, to say "'I--I--I'" (L 164-5).

The novel suggests that Mrs. Ramsay's mind is more untrained than essentially irrational, just as Mr. Ramsay's mind is more trained than essentially rational. Her mind has a factual side, but it finds no outlet. When she dispenses charity, she notes down information about the people who are unemployed as well as about the earnings and expenditures of those who have work. She tries to be "what with her untrained mind she greatly admired, an investigator, elucidating the social problem" (L 20). Mrs. Ramsay is not allowed, however, to apply any of the knowledge she gathers in this way. She would like to work outside the home to solve some of the social problems which appall her, but with a husband and eight children, she has no time. Furthermore, the deferential, sympathetic role she plays in relation to her husband and children results in their conviction that she is good for nothing else. When she tries to call attention to some of the social problems in which she is interested, they only laugh at her (L 160-1).

Mrs. Ramsay's so-called intellectual inferiority and irrationality, therefore, merely are the products of both her own and her husband's need to believe in them. With this idea of women's inferior potential goes the poor education and lack of experience and purposive activity outside the home which perpetuates the idea. To Tansley's taunt, "Women can't paint, can't write," therefore, is added the Ramsay family's





laughter at Mrs. Ramsay's attempt to define and her desire to solve social problems. Lily continues to paint despite Tansley. Mrs. Ramsay is halted by the first derisive chuckle. Her activity never gets beyond the wishing stage. Woolf does not advise women to imitate masculine methods of pursuing knowledge or the masculine systems and institutions established to handle the problems of the country, but she does advocate the use in society of the special knowledge women have gleaned from long confinement to the sphere of human relationships. Mrs. Ramsay is a striking example of woman's energy denied outlet in a society which very well might be improved thereby. Instead her energies are channeled in directions which are debilitating both to herself and to others because of the exhausting and tyrannical emotional dependencies created.

Mrs. Ramsay's self-doubts are increased by the fact that not all men respond to her beauty and need her power to sympathize with them and to renew their self-confidence. The contrast between her power over Charles Tansley and her lack of power over Augustus Carmichael is a case in point. She knows how to make Tansley feel pleased with himself but feels pity and contempt for him at the same time. She calms him and makes him confident with what he interprets as insinuations of "the greatness of man's intellect, even in its decay" and "the subjection of all wives. . .to their husband's labours"(L 22). But, however soothing she may be, Mrs. Ramsay is condescending toward and even contemptuous of what she can manipulate so easily. She pities him enough to decide that her children must not be allowed to laugh at him any more, but she is annoyed by his glibness, his academic jargon, and sums him up as "an awful prig--oh yes, an insufferable bore" (L 25). Mrs. Ramsay is less ready to acknowledge a similar reaction, as we have seen, to her





husband's emotional dependence upon her which, she realizes, may be at least in part her fault.

The fact that Carmichael needs nothing from her leads Mrs. Ramsay to suspect both that need and her own motives for fulfilling it. Carmichael's shrinking away wounds her and makes her suspect "that all this desire of hers to give, to help, was vanity" and selfishness (L 68-9). The justice of her assessment of her motives is borne out by her thought that the people present at her dinner, especially Paul and Minta who have become engaged, will remember not only the setting but also her. Mr. Ramsay's desire that people should continue to read his works is paralleled by his wife's desire that people should continue to remember her part in their lives. Yet she admires Carmichael, in whose life she plays no essential part, in a way that she does not admire Charles Tansley or even, at unguarded moments, her husband. "Whether people laughed at him or were angry with him," she observes, Carmichael "was the same. He did not like her, she knew that; but partly for that very reason she respected him, and looking at him, drinking soup, very large and calm in the failing light, and monumental, and contemplative, she wondered what he did feel then, and why he was always content and dignified. . ." (L 150). Carmichael's confidence and self-sufficiency suggest an inner strength that impresses Mrs. Ramsay even though, and perhaps even because such strength means that she does not impress him.

In addition to her doubts about deference and chivalry, Mrs. Ramsay has doubts about her preoccupation with matchmaking and marriage. In Orlando Woolf credits the nineteenth century with this marriage mania and satirizes the proliferation of wedding rings which causes Orlando's ring finger to itch. In To the Lighthouse, like an evangelist on behalf



of the spirit of the previous age, Mrs. Ramsay exerts her powers to the utmost in order to bring men and women together in marriage. In the course of the novel she engineers one marriage and tries to engineer another. Paul Rayley's thoughts indicate that she has given him the confidence and courage to propose to Minta Doyle (L 123; 180). Apparently, too, she has had some influence over Minta. Mrs. Ramsay reluctantly acknowledges the possibility that she exerts pressure on people to marry and suspects her motives for urging them to do so. She realizes that she is "driven on, too quickly she knew, almost as if it were an escape for her too, to say that people must marry; people must have children" (L 96-7). When she talks to her husband about the engagement, she wonders "why. . .one wants people to marry?" and associates this question with another, "What was the value, the meaning of things?" (L 188). The questions are unanswered, but their juxtaposition suggests some relation in Mrs. Ramsay's mind between the two. To her, meaning and value reside in marriage, a marriage such as hers with Mr. Ramsay.<sup>12</sup> Whatever her doubts, she has formulated no alternate meanings or values. In fact, her insistence upon marriage for everyone else suggests a desire to defend her own sense of meaning and value, to provide an answer to the question of what she has done with her life. Through the marriages she creates, she recaptures something of her own past and justifies a life in which her only identity has been that of wife and mother. And, by recreating the pattern and meaning of her life in the next generation, she achieves a kind of immortality.

The other marriage Mrs. Ramsay tries to engineer is between Lily Briscoe and William Bankes. Lily does not realize fully that Mrs. Ramsay doubts herself and her values. If she did, her struggle against those





values would be less difficult. She does realize that she could not live as Mrs. Ramsay lives and also paint. Life for a woman, at least as defined by Mrs. Ramsay, makes art impossible. Neither time nor energy remain for it. Lily sees love, as represented in the people around her as splendid but, especially for a woman, exhausting. It means Mrs. Ramsay "giving, giving, giving," and then dying, while Mr. Ramsay just takes (L 232). It feeds "on the treasure of the house, greedily, disgustingly" (L 270-1). The members of the Ramsay family continually come to Mrs. Ramsay with various needs and demands because she is a woman. They come until she feels as if she is "nothing but a sponge sopped full of human emotions" (L 54,63). Once in a while she has a chance to consider her sense of life apart from her family. Then she can shrink to "a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others" (L 99-100).

Mrs. Ramsay's barely-acknowledged doubts about deference, chivalry, and marriage, as well as her unfulfilled need to develop other aspects of herself, cast doubt upon her entire view of woman's role. The irony of her position is that she deprecates and unthinkingly tries to jeopardize, even to destroy some of the qualities she likes in people and would like to have developed in herself. She does so because to value those qualities is to threaten her traditional image of herself and of her life. She admires secure and independent people, but they do not need her or the system of crippling intellectual and emotional dependencies that has constituted her life. The irony of Mrs. Ramsay's position is most apparent in her relationship with Lily Briscoe. Mrs. Ramsay likes Lily's apparent self-sufficiency, just as she likes Carmichael's, but she has little sympathy for the artistic career which both fosters and benefits



from it. When she insists, moreover, upon marriage for Lily and for all women, she gives no indication that she envisions a male-female relationship any different from her own. Lily, on the other hand, is thrown into a turmoil of attraction-repulsion by Mrs. Ramsay's insistence that she marry. A substantial portion of her development is toward a realization that a woman need not, indeed must not choose between art and life, and that a woman's life need not be like Mrs. Ramsay's.

The extent to which Mrs. Ramsay pressures Lily about marriage is revealed by Lily's thoughts. In Part III she recalls how Mrs. Ramsay had singled out William Bankes and had tried to inculcate in Lily her own attitude toward men, one of admiration and pity. To Lily Mrs. Ramsay praises Bankes's kindness and his ability as a scientist but pities the life he leads in a house which reveals no woman's touches. She suggests that Lily has the qualities that make her a natural mate for Bankes and sends the two of them on walks. In Part I, therefore, Lily finds Mrs. Ramsay "alarming," "high-handed," (L 76), "wilful," and "commanding" (L 79). She watches Mrs. Ramsay take people's actions and words and "adroitly shape; even maliciously twist" them. She sees her moving about, laughing, insisting that Lily "must, Minta must, they all must marry, since in the whole world whatever laurels might be tossed to her (but Mrs. Ramsay cared not a fig for her painting), or triumphs won by her. . .there could be no disputing this: an unmarried woman. . ., an unmarried woman has missed the best of life" (L 80). Against Mrs. Ramsay's insistence on marriage, Lily hurls her role as dutiful daughter, the only other traditionally-acceptable alternative to wife and mother. Lily even hurls, "had she dared to say it, her painting." Yet Mrs. Ramsay's apparent conviction causes Lily to doubt herself. She feels that



her father and her painting cannot equal marriage as Mrs. Ramsay sees it. Still she lies awake insisting that she is exempt from whatever law requires women to marry. At this moment, unaware of Mrs. Ramsay's similar desire for solitude and for a sense of herself as an individual, Lily pleads that "she liked to be alone; she liked to be herself; she was not made for that." Ultimately Lily finds herself laughing "at the thought of Mrs. Ramsay presiding with immutable calm over destinies which she completely failed to understand" (L81). In Part III she has attained enough detachment to recall Mrs. Ramsay and to wonder, "What was this mania of hers for marriage?" (L 270).

Throughout the dinner scene, during which Lily feels coerced into playing the feminine trick of being nice to insecure young men, she keeps reminding herself that her painting alone matters and that she does not have to get married. At the same time, she is flung violently between the poles of attraction to and repulsion from love and marriage. Mrs. Ramsay's initial success with Paul and Minta causes Lily to feel left out and envious, yet she mentally satirizes Mrs. Ramsay leading "her victims. . .to the altar" (L 157-8). She admits that love is "beautiful," "exciting," and "necessary" yet the endless praises that have been sung to it never seem to touch woman's desire for something more. Nor do they indicate all that is "tedious, puerile, and inhumane" in what is called love (L 159-60). Lily admires the Ramsay's, yet she is quite aware that they are not always happy together. Their married life has had its share of bedroom doors slamming violently, tempers flaring, plates whizzing through windows (L 305).

The repulsion combined with the attraction in Lily's attitude toward love and marriage can be interpreted as a weakness on her part,





an inability to confront certain aspects of life. Such an interpretation, however, is the product of traditional notions about what a normal woman's attitude toward men, love, and marriage should be. Lily's negative reaction is not against men, love, and marriage per se so much as it is against what a patriarchal system has made of them. Her negative reaction is, in one sense, a strength. It is part of the more complex and more encompassing perspective required of the artist. Lily struggles toward a more inclusive view of male-female qualities and relationships which admits alternatives besides that represented by the Ramsays. In Part III of the novel, Lily imagines herself smugly telling Mrs. Ramsay about the failure, from a traditional point of view, of the Rayleys' marriage. Their relationship has expanded to include a third person, Paul's mistress, who shares his intellectual life and is admired and befriended by Minta. Lily also feels triumphant because ten years later she stands in the same spot still painting and still unmarried.

Mrs. Ramsay is wrong about marriage for William and Lily, but she is right about their compatibility. Her mistake is to assume that compatibility necessitates a conventional legal bond, deference, chivalry, and numerous children. Just as the Rayleys' relationship is quite different from any contained within Mrs. Ramsay's view of marriage, so is that between William and Lily. Their intimacy seems to be based, not upon sexual attraction, but upon mutual respect. It is a satisfying and fulfilling relationship for both of them. Their compatibility is evident in Part I of the novel. They share the evenings, responding in similar ways to the ocean setting. They share an interest in the Ramsays. William is more preoccupied with understanding Mr. Ramsay than Mrs. Ramsay; Lily is more preoccupied with understanding Mrs. Ramsay than



Mr. Ramsay. Their preference is comprehensible (homosexuality aside) in that the Ramsay of the same sex represents an alternate way of life to the one each has chosen. Both William and Lily have difficulty identifying with the Ramsays' domesticity. Both, moreover, admire each other, but neither makes the other larger or smaller than life. He admires her orderly habits and good sense which outweigh, in his opinion, her lack of more feminine allurements (L 33). He likes her, too, because he can talk comfortably with her about Mr. Ramsay (L 74). She identifies with him as someone who has his work and needs no pity (L 132). But while she admires him as a "generous, pure-hearted, heroic man," she is aware of his eccentricities (L 42). She likes him, too, because he convinces her that "one could talk of painting. . .seriously to a man" (L 272). His attitude toward female artists is not Tansley's.

In Part III Lily decides that Bankes's friendship "had been one of the pleasures of her life." She recalls his consideration for her, the walks during which they enjoyed the flowers and he told her about perspective and architecture. She recalls her aid in his purchase of a new carpet as well as a discussion they had had about Mrs. Ramsay. When Lily says to herself in this context that "she loved William Bankes" (L 272), the words suggest a bond different from that recognized by Mrs. Ramsay, but one no less satisfying to Lily. Her relationship with Bankes is an alternative which does not exhaust and drain the woman so thoroughly that she is unable to function as an artist. Their relationship is not idealized in any way; it is not suggested necessarily as a substitute for the Ramsays' relationship. It is suggested as a reasonably satisfying alternative, perhaps only one of many satisfying alternatives, for people who need significant relationships with other





people but also need to expend large amounts of time and energy in other ways. Anyone aware of Mrs. Ramsay's dissatisfactions as presented in the novel, anyone sympathetic with Lily's desire and determination to paint, hardly can conclude that her friendship with Bankes is a poor substitute for Mrs. Ramsay's marriage to Mr. Ramsay.

In 1932 Winifred Holtby, like May Sinclair before her, objected to the fact that just when the female artist "might have climbed out of the traditional limitations of domestic obligation by claiming to be a human being, she was thrust back into them by the authority of the psychologist." The psychologist insisted that a woman "must enjoy the full cycle of sex-experience, or she would become riddled with complexes like a rotting fruit."<sup>13</sup> Two years later Holtby notes that professional women, including artists, may choose not to marry in order to devote themselves to their work and that in most cases they may lead full, satisfying, and happy lives.<sup>14</sup> The recurrence in To the Lighthouse of the term "old maid" indicates, however, the extent to which views other than Holtby's prevailed in the previous decade. Old maidishness in the novel is associated overtly with fussiness, precision, and ill-temper and covertly with self-centeredness. It is a term applied to unmarried people, whether male or female. When Bankes gets tired of conversation and makes a remark "about punctuality being one of the minor virtues which we do not acquire until later in life," Mrs. Ramsay thinks "what an old maid William was becoming" (L 145-6). The narrative voice describes Lily pitching "her easel with her precise old-maidish movements" (L 229) and Lily, a few pages later, so refers to herself. The context of the latter passage, however, is important. Lily feels inadequate to cope with the overwhelming need for sympathy which has



driven Mr. Ramsay to bear down upon her at her easel. In response to his groan "any other woman in the whole world would have done something, said something--all except myself, thought Lily, girding at herself bitterly, who am not a woman, but a peevish, ill-tempered, dried-up old maid presumably" (L 234). The "presumably" which concludes the thought, however, suggests that Lily repeats to herself the charges of society that single women are not women, almost believing them as she almost believes that women can neither paint nor write. But although she repeats and hurls both charges at herself, she believes neither completely. Her struggle to maintain her sense of herself as a woman and as an artist merely is rendered more difficult and painful.<sup>15</sup>

When the complexities of point of view in To the Lighthouse are considered, the status of Lily Briscoe as an artist becomes clear. All of the limited views of her as a bad or uncommitted painter or as an unfulfilled old maid fall into their proper subordinate places. Lily, it becomes apparent, suffers from intense feelings of inferiority. She feels inferior as an artist because she is a woman. The cause is the generally-held opinion that women are incapable of significant artistic production. Moreover, she feels inferior as a woman because she is an artist. The cause is the equally-prevalent notion that women must marry and devote themselves to others. Woolf's point is not that Lily is inferior as an artist but that she is hampered because she considers herself so. Her struggle for self-confidence in an environment which exhibits little confidence in her is continuous, painful, and as often futile as it is successful.

One of the recurrent discrepancies in the criticism of To the Lighthouse is related directly to the complexities of Lily's attitude toward





herself as woman and artist, although most critics do not approach the problem in this way. Most of them rightly assume that Lily is a developing rather than a static character.<sup>16</sup> The exact direction of her development, however, causes considerable confusion. That Lily needs a balance between life and art generally is maintained. These opposites are referred to in a number of ways: involvement and detachment, emotion and intellect, vision and design, female and male. Which Lily has and which she needs, however, apparently is a problem. Actually no clear progression from the dominance of art to the inclusion of life or from the dominance of life to the inclusion of art exists. The progression, instead, is toward a redefinition of both terms. Once they are redefined, a creatively-productive balance between them becomes possible. Art cannot be defined as impossible for a woman. Life for a woman cannot be defined as self-abnegation. Once these fundamental redefinitions are achieved, Lily can accept herself as both artist and woman. The one does not necessitate a denial of the other, merely an adjustment of traditional expectations. The ability to create as a whole person, without the angry or resigned sex-consciousness resulting from too-rigid definitions of sex roles, enables Lily to complete her painting. For however brief a moment she achieves the androgeneity<sup>17</sup> which enables her to harmonize and to express the hitherto discordant elements of her experience. The final line she draws in the center of her painting of Mrs. Ramsay not only defines the contradictory halves of woman's experience in a transitional period but also unites them.

### Orlando

In *Orlando* (1929), Woolf treats the problem of the female artist in a more fantastic vein.<sup>18</sup> She extends the development of her artist-





character over several centuries and, fairly early in the book, in the seventeenth century, changes the sex of that character from male to female. Most critics offer explanations for this change and, while some are better than others, they are by no means mutually exclusive. One explanation is that, in the Sackville family upon which the book is based, the male line became extinct in 1843 and the family was continued through the female line.<sup>19</sup> Another is that Woolf reflects a change in the history of English literature and culture from the masculinity of the Elizabethan age to the femininity of the Victorian.<sup>20</sup> Undoubtedly she does develop in Orlando an analogy between the personal history of the individual and the history of English culture. In addition to a change from masculinity to femininity, however, she sees a cumulative process at work. The book suggests that the individual personality, like English culture, is dual, even multiple. At the same time, Orlando and English culture remain essentially the same.

May Sinclair briefly anticipates by over twenty years the sex change, over the centuries, from masculine to feminine that is the basis of Woolf's book. Lucia Harden in The Divine Fire (1904) represents the youngest generation of a British family as old and established as the Sackville family whose history is in the background of Woolf's work. A chronicle of the Harden family exists. An interesting fact about that chronicle, however, is that it makes no reference to the women of the family except to mention that none of them ever had been allowed to inherit the family's prized library. "The inspired pen of the chronicler," we are told in a tone anticipatory of Woolf's own levity, "evoked the long procession of those Hardens whose motto was Invictus; cross-legged crusading Hardens, Hardens in trunk hose, Hardens in ruff and doublet,



in ruffles and periwig; Hardens in powder and patches, in the loosest of stocks and the tightest of trousers; and never a petticoat among them all."<sup>21</sup> Like the biographer-narrator who later relates the history of Orlando, the chronicler of the Harden family has tried to be strictly factual, to avoid delving into the psychology of his subjects. The portraits of the Hardens, however, suggest much. The male Hardens had married, generation after generation

their opposites. Their wives were not expected to do anything noteworthy, beyond sitting for their portraits to the masters of the day. . . .The portraits have immortalized their faces and their temperaments. Ladies of lax fibre, with shining lips and hazy eyes; ladies of slender build, with small and fragile foreheads, they hang for ever facing their uniformly heavy-browed and serious lords. Looking at those faces, you cannot wonder that those old scholars had but a poor opinion of woman, the irrational and mutable element in things, or that the library had been handed down from father to son, from uncle to nephew, evading the cosmic vanity by devious lines of descent. It was a tradition in the family that its men should be scholars and its women beauties, occasionally frail.<sup>22</sup>

Woolf's Ramsays are a modern counterpart of these marriages of scholarship and mutable beauty. But in To the Lighthouse, and even more so in Orlando, a transition to a new order is suggested. In The Divine Fire, too, "the Harden intellect had changed its sex." After ten generations the family produces Sir Frederick, Lucia's father, who has the characteristics of the female side of the family. Then it produces Lucia, who has the Harden intellect softened by a certain amount of feminine emotion and hesitation.

Orlando's sex change, several critics note, is primarily Woolf's way of presenting her own theories about the human personality and about the differences and similarities between the sexes.<sup>23</sup> The allusion to Shakespeare's young nobleman, Orlando, in As You Like It is appropriate not only because Woolf's novel begins in the Elizabethan age or because





Shakespeare's young man dashes through the forest and behaves in a love-stricken and extravagantly poetical manner, but also because the play must have suggested to Woolf or at least reinforced her idea that beneath such social conventions as clothes and manners the two sexes are similar or mixed. Shakespeare's Orlando does not change sexes, but Rosalind, the tall, clever woman whom he loves, is one of the witty young women, originally played by boys in Shakespeare's plays, who successfully disguise themselves as men.<sup>24</sup> In that guise she mocks traditional views of women and love.

Ralph Samuelson is correct, however, when he insists that Woolf does not change Orlando's sex from male to female only to suggest fundamental similarities between the sexes. She also wants to portray a woman, and more importantly, a woman who is an artist, in conflict with her environment.<sup>25</sup> The long time span and Orlando's sex change enable Woolf to illustrate the proposition advanced in A Room of One's Own that while artists in general have problems, female artists have more. Once Orlando becomes a woman, the obstacles she confronts are much like those Lily Briscoe encounters in the early twentieth century. The elevation of the male and deprecation of the female intellect and the female obsession with marriage are not peculiar to Lily's situation; they are the products of at least two centuries.

Because Woolf insists that the problems of the female artist are not inherent to her sex but originate in her social environment, point of view is an essential consideration whenever a female artist appears in her fiction. Orlando is not a multiple-point-of-view novel like To the Lighthouse; nevertheless, society's opinion of the female artist is clear. Orlando's story is narrated in the third person, but Woolf replaces the



elusive narrative voice of To the Lighthouse with that of a more distinct character, one with many of the characteristics of the traditional biographer. As John Graham points out, Woolf's extensive reading and reviewing had familiarized her thoroughly with the pompous displays of superficial learning as well as the fundamental ignorance of numerous biographers. Much of Orlando parodies their excesses and, as Graham suggests, attributes them to a value system that is masculine.<sup>26</sup> Instead of seeing Orlando wholly through the biographer's eyes, however, we increasingly see the world through her eyes. Graham concludes that this change from fantastic to serious is detrimental and results in the failure of the book as a work of art.<sup>27</sup> Assuming both that Woolf tried to produce a work of relatively pure fantasy and that she should have done so, he imposes upon her some of the very aesthetic criteria she defies. Frank Baldanza more accurately describes the book as a combination of fantasy, biography, history, and fiction with serious ideas, a mixture of content and style that represents a revolt against the traditional male-dominated novel.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, Woolf's narrator does resemble in many ways the omniscient male author of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century English novel who knows his characters' thoughts, listens in on and reproduces their soliloquies, passes judgment and editorializes when so moved, and talks about his problems as a writer. Such authors are biographers with a difference, able to choose subjects and take liberties with them that the biographer traditionally cannot.<sup>29</sup> Orlando thus represents a revolt against more than one manifestation of a masculine value system.

Woolf presents Orlando, her female artist, partly from the point of view of a male writer unlikely to understand or to sympathize with her problems, the very attitude, in fact, likely to perpetuate those





problems. Because the narrator is interested in facts, however, and because he liberally reports Orlando's thoughts and quotes her soliloquies, we know her responses to that attitude. In the final chapter, the narrator relies to a greater extent than in previous chapters upon Orlando's thoughts. By doing so, by even occasionally dramatizing her thoughts as she explores her inner reality, he inadvertently demonstrates that the novel can do without his pedantry and garrulity, that other ways of characterizing women exist. The meaning of a person's life becomes what he perceives it to be, not what another perceives about him. If Woolf presents the history of English literature and culture along with the history of an individual personality, then the increasing effacement of the narrator in the final chapter is an accurate reflection of the new tendencies in the novel, not a loss of control over an originally-fantastic work. Presumably the narrator reflects the spirit of his age just as Orlando does. The narrator's age is the early twentieth century in which theories about the novel are at odds. If Woolf allows her narrator to choose an approach similar to that of the male novelists of her time whose values and methods do not differ greatly from those of their predecessors, she does so in order to parody it and in order to supplant it at the end. In this respect, Orlando is a more consistent work than it initially appears.

Point of view in Orlando is still more complicated. Much of what the narrator says is not parodied. His brief discourses on Time and the Self, memory, the sexes, the modern hostess, and genius are less examples of his pedantry than they are Woolf-like observations meant for serious consideration. Moreover, Woolf did not take the female artist and her problems so seriously that she was incapable of humor. On the contrary,





the mockery in Orlando frequently is directed not at the narrator but at Orlando herself, and the reader is encouraged to identify not with Orlando against the pedantic excesses of the narrator but with the narrator against various excesses of Orlando. An example of the latter is her tendency to reflect the spirit of the age in which she lives by means of various literary extravagances. In such instances the narrator becomes the parodist. In Orlando, therefore, Woolf treats the female artist and her problems both seriously and comically. In fact, as many modern commentators on comedy realize, the two are inseparable.<sup>30</sup> Her tone often is, to use Joyce's coinages, "joco-serious" or "serio-comic." Certainly she says of Orlando in her diary, "I want fun. I want fantasy." But she recognizes the serious element in the intellectual play that gives her such relief: "I want (and this was serious) to give things their caricature value" (WD 136-7).

Orlando dramatizes Woolf's contention that while male artists have problems, female artists have more. The biographer-narrator exhibits little sympathy for noblemen who write, but even less for women who do so. His mockery, which suggests not only contemporary attitudes toward the artist, but attitudes prevalent in previous centuries, is held up to ridicule. In the first two chapters the narrator, who describes as a horrible malady young Orlando's fondness for writing, shares the bias of the Elizabethan age against noblemen writing. Why a nobleman would want to write instead of merely to enjoy his wealth, why he would give all he has to write well and to win praise for his efforts, is incomprehensible. In Orlando's particular case writing is not a fatal disease, as it is in the cases of noblemen who, discovering that wealth cannot buy talent or fame, become physically ill or suicidal. In Orlando's case



writing is a vice, an addiction. Orlando, quite aware of such attitudes, is prolific but, even when one of his works is published, secretive: "He had never dared show it even to his mother, since to write, much more to publish, was, he knew, for a nobleman an inexpiable disgrace" (0 72).

The narrator also ridicules the female Orlando's desire to write. In this case the narrator's opinion coincides with the opinion of the female artist that prevailed in the nineteenth century and continued into the twentieth. Writing may be described as some kind of disease or vice in the case of an Elizabethan nobleman, but at least he is neither accused of shamming nor treated condescendingly. The female Orlando's constant writing and thinking, as well as her lack of interest in love frustrate the narrator.

Surely, since she is a woman, and a beautiful woman, and a woman in the prime of life, she will soon give over this pretence of writing and thinking and begin to think, at least of a game-keeper (and as long as she thinks of a man, nobody objects to a woman thinking). And then she will write him a little note (and as long as she writes little notes nobody objects to a woman writing either) and make an assignation for Sunday dusk; and Sunday dusk will come; and the gamekeeper will whistle under the window--all of which is, of course, the very stuff of life and the only possible subject for fiction (0 242).

To whom the ironic parenthetical remarks in this passage should be attributed is uncertain. They seem to indicate that the narrator's frustration frustrates someone else, presumably the author. To the narrator's dismay, Orlando neither thinks of a man nor writes notes to one. Her varying degrees of affection for dogs, her friends and fellow poets, and for poetry itself do not qualify as love. Using the male novelists as his authorities, the narrator associates love with the sexual act, finds the subject of his biography wanting, and in disgust, temporarily abandons her.





The narrator's suggestion that a woman writing or thinking is a woman pretending is based upon the same assumption that governs Tansley's assertion in To the Lighthouse that "women can't paint, can't write." Prevailing opinion refuses to allow women any means of fulfillment other than lovers, husbands, and children. The origins of Lily Briscoe's problems are evident shortly after Orlando becomes a woman in the seventeenth century. Her sex changes, but her identity, basic appearance, and memory remain the same. For a while, the discovery that by yielding or resisting, she has power over a man's smiles or frowns exhilarates her. The narrator, however, reminds us that Orlando's immaturity and the novelty of her experience account for her pleasure. In this instance, Woolf does not parody his masculine values; instead, she subtly mocks Orlando, who plays with a new toy that soon will tire her. At the same time she observes the inordinately high value placed on woman's chastity and realizes the extent to which she must manufacture lies and work painstakingly by indirections to gain her ends.

In the late seventeenth and still more in the eighteenth century, Orlando's situation as a woman increasingly has implications for her career as a writer. Deprecated and kept poor and ignorant, women respond either by suppressing feelings of superiority and contempt or by humbly acquiescing in their own deprecation. Orlando is tempted by both responses. When she pours tea for "my lords," she becomes aware not so much of their certainty of woman's intellectual inferiority as of the insecurity that prompts them to keep women ignorant. At this point in her development, Orlando, Tiresias-like, understands both sexes. She admires neither; nevertheless, she prefers being a woman. Anticipating the Woolf of Three Guineas, she concludes that it is better "to be



clothed with poverty and ignorance, which are the dark garments of the female sex; better to leave the rule and discipline of the world to others; better to be quit of martial ambition, the love of power, and all the other manly desires if so one can more fully enjoy the most exalted raptures known to the human spirit, which are. . .contemplation, solitude, love'"(0 146). Again, however, Orlando's exuberance is tempered by the narrator who notes, Woolf-like, that she is "about to run into the extreme folly--that which none is more distressing in woman or man either--of being proud of her sex" (0 146). For the female writer, a smug female stance is just as debilitating as a servile one.

That Orlando also is tempted by the latter is illustrated in Chapter Four by her encounter with the Archduke. At his approach, she quickly hides the manuscript upon which she works, although she suspects that the time spent with him will be wasted. Unable to use violence to get rid of him, Orlando must resort to indirect feminine tactics. She must overcome his tendency to make allowances for a member of the inferior sex and make herself sufficiently offensive to drive him away. Successful, she does not regret the loss of his person, his fortune, or of the chance to marry; but she wonders about having given up "Life and a Lover." Beginning to write the phrase upon her page, she turns instead to the mirror to try on jewelry and to ponder her attractiveness to men (0 168). The narrator, in this instance, neither mocking nor mocked, sums up the situation; Orlando, since she has become a woman, has changed: "She was becoming a little more modest, as women are, of her brains, and a little more vain, as women are, of her person" (0 170).

That Orlando exhibits these traditionally feminine characteristics and that they inhibit her writing is clear. Why she exhibits them is





less certain. The narrator explores the question, vacillating between the idea that our social roles, often symbolized by our clothes, determine us and the idea that qualities inherent in us determine our social roles. Deciding at one moment in favor of the latter position, he immediately faces a dilemma and qualifies his statement. "Different though the sexes are," he says, "they intermix. In every human being a vacillation from one sex to the other takes place, and often it is only the clothes that keep the male or female likeness, while underneath the sex is the very opposite of what it is above" (O 171-2). In Orlando's case, he concludes that he cannot determine which sex is dominant. Orlando, however tempted by the opposing stances of defiant female superiority and humble female inferiority, is potentially androgynous.

Like the male Orlando of the Elizabethan age, the female Orlando of the eighteenth century suffers a period of disillusionment about some of her contemporary literary heroes. The male Orlando, however, considers himself capable of attaining what his heroes had attained. The female Orlando's alternating defiance and humility result merely in some blasphemous thoughts while she busily pours tea for Pope, Swift, and Addison. She does not find the intellect, as it is represented by these men, particularly impressive. The narrator, identifying now with Orlando's reaction, tries to put into words the reasons for her dissatisfaction:

the intellect, divine as it is, and all worshipful, has a habit of lodging in the most seedy of carcasses, and often, alas, acts the cannibal among the other faculties so that often, where the Mind is biggest, the Heart, the Senses, Magnanimity, Charity, Tolerance, Kindliness, and the rest of them scarcely have room to breathe. Then the high opinion poets have of themselves; then the low one they have of others; then the enmities, injuries, envies, and repartees in which they are constantly engaged; then the volubility with which they impart them; then the rapacity with which they demand sympathy for them. . . (O 193).





In addition, Orlando discovers that, for all their attention, the wits of London think of women as a larger variety of children whose opinions are of no significance. When Orlando, bored and disgusted, neglects to respond with the required admiration and sympathy, the suspicious and vengeful Mr. Pope immediately writes a brief satire of her. These eighteenth-century tea parties with their illusion-creating hostesses and egotistical, reputation-conscious, sympathy-demanding intellectuals echo, more than faintly, through the Ramsay's summer home in To the Lighthouse where Lily, like Orlando, is not always equal to the part she is required to play.

Orlando discovers that men are mistaken about women in other ways. She rejects not only the opinion that they are intellectually inferior, but also the notion that women's conversation is nonexistent without men to stimulate it, that they see each other only as rivals, and that they are incapable of affection for each other. Such independent conclusions about the male wits and about the attitudes and abilities of women are necessary to Orlando's development as an artist. They are necessary if she is to reflect in her art the experiences of women any differently from the way in which her own are reflected by the narrator in his role as traditional male biographer.

Until she reaches the nineteenth century, Orlando adapts with little trouble to the spirits of the centuries through which she lives. She emerges from the eighteenth century tainted with defiance and deference but with her sense of herself intact. The spirit of the nineteenth century, however, thoroughly repels and temporarily vanquishes her. The age is characterized by great fertility and, at the same time, great restriction. Plants burgeon, childbirths increase, and, in the realm of



art, sentences and works lengthen. Euphemisms and circumlocutions, however, conceal all of the fundamental experiences of life. Women readily blush or weep and modestly wear crinolines to disguise their almost continual pregnancies.

Orlando is very much affected by this environment. Weakened by the lack of exercise which is the result of restrictive dress and the inactivity demanded of women in the nineteenth century, she looks for someone to lean upon. She sees rings and couples everywhere. Her own barren wedding-ring finger is so agitated that her writing is inhibited. Somehow she must appease the spirit of the age before she can function as an artist. Less able to ignore its pressure than Lily Briscoe in the succeeding century, Orlando must marry. Nevertheless, if she is to write, her marriage must not be anything like the Ramsays'. Therefore, she actually compromises with the spirit of the age rather than submits to it. Both Orlando and her Shelleyan husband, Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine, Esquire, admire each other as androgynous. Orlando's masculine characteristics have not been overwhelmed altogether by ideas about women then prevalent. Shelmerdine's feminine characteristics are combined with a penchant for sailing around Cape Horn which leaves his wife relatively free from family duties for long periods of time.

Orlando fully realizes that her situation is unusual. Woolf hardly presents it as a solution for the female artist; Orlando's situation, in fact, is more likely to suggest how remote any solution is. She is married, but her husband rarely is home; she is fond of people besides him; her greatest desire is to write poetry. Prevailing opinion, which apparently decrees that for women marriage and a dedication to art are incompatible, causes Orlando to doubt her ability to write. With much





trepidation, she puts the matter to the test. Her pen behaves and she writes, not without concessions to the spirit of the age, but not without getting a lot past it as well. Mostly concerned with appearances, the spirit of the age notes only the wedding ring and the husband, and passes on.

Orlando, however, does more than take a husband. Somehow she gives birth to a son. Though the narrator, with the biographer's devotion to facts, duly notes down the day and hour of birth, he tells us nothing more. Perhaps he exhibits Victorian reticence on such subjects; perhaps, with his masculine view of the world, he cannot describe pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood; such subjects possibly do not interest him. He does continue to describe Orlando's thoughts where maybe such subjects do not take precedence. Indeed, the relationship most like mother and child in the book exists not between Orlando and her son but between Orlando and her poem, "The Oak Tree." She feels "the manuscript which reposed above her heart. . .shuffling and beating as if it were a living thing, and, what was still odder, and showed how fine a sympathy was between them, Orlando, by inclining her head, could make out what it was that it was saying" (0 245). Her poem asks to be born into the world, to be published and read.

Orlando marries and has a child as the feminine role demands. Neither fact, however, hinders her writing. Her marriage is not one Mrs. Ramsay, wearing her public mask of deference, would understand. Orlando's marriage involves two total persons, who have developed both the masculine and the feminine sides of their personalities. From what little we know of the marriage, it seems to involve no exhausting or crippling dependencies, no deceiving of oneself or of one's spouse. It



seems satisfying to two people who spend much time pursuing other interests. And perhaps because Orlando has one instead of eight children like Mrs. Ramsay, she also can give birth to a few works of art. Such a serious description of a marriage contracted and perpetuated with such high spirits and so much hilarity in the novel seems somewhat out-of-place. Yet, when Orlando is discussed, as it is here, in the context of Woolf's overall treatment of the female artist, such an approach is inevitable. One of the female artist's major problems is the acceptance of alternate definitions of woman's role.

In Orlando, then, Woolf takes the female artist out of the early twentieth-century social milieu within which she struggles grimly for self-confidence and places her within the much larger context of English cultural history. At this greater distance, the origins of the female artist's problems are evident. They originate as far back as the Restoration and the eighteenth century in the insecure male ego as well as in the immature female's enjoyment of exercising indirect power over men. They multiply in the nineteenth century with the emphasis upon marriage and motherhood for women. And, as To the Lighthouse shows, they persist into the twentieth.



F. Life with an "Alien Consciousness"  
Dorothy Richardson's Miriam on Marriage

". . . artist and surgeon, Christian and rationalist, pessimist and optimist, do actually and truly live in different and mutually exclusive worlds, not only of thought but also of perception. Only the happy circumstance that our ordinary speech is conventional, not realistic, permits us to conceal from one another the unique and lonely world in which each lives. Now and then an artist is born, terribly articulate, foolishly truthful, who insists on 'speaking as he saw.'"

Evelyn Underhill, Mysticism (1910)

Woolf's emphasis on environment as an explanation for the female artist's lack of productivity and Richardson's emphasis on woman's sense of a stable inner life that environmental limitations cannot touch are reflected in their handling of point of view. Woolf chooses the multiple point of view for her presentation of Lily Briscoe and an inconsistent but partly traditional male point of view for her presentation of Orlando. These choices underscore the fact that the female artist exists within a social context dominated by male values inimical to a woman's self-confidence and thus to the pursuit of her art. These choices also suggest that, while reality resides in the inner rather than in the outer life, it also is a relative and multiple matter, dependent upon the person or persons perceiving it. Any resolution of the contradictions involved is attained by the artist who sees simultaneously through many pairs of eyes, who sees the limitation as well as the value of any single pair operating alone. The social devaluation, however, of the way women have learned to perceive life often prevents the female artist from attaining the inclusive perspective necessary for the production of significant art. She has more trouble valuing and including her own view than that of others.





While Woolf's portrait of the female artist is a composite of three major female artist-figures, two of whom we have discussed, Richardson presents only one such character, Miriam Henderson, to whose consciousness we are confined throughout the thirteen sections of Pilgrimage. Miriam, who is a careful observer and listener, infers the inner lives of other characters, but their consciousnesses never receive equal attention. Because we are confined to Miriam's consciousness and have access to other people's views only as she responds to them, these views ultimately become less important than the sense of a stable inner life to which she continually returns and for which she continually looks in others. In the inner life where reality resides regardless of circumstances, no contradictions exist. One commodious certainty encompasses all seemingly contradictory opinions, systems, and forces. For the female artist this inclusiveness of perspective is not hard-won in the face of hostile social forces; it is, instead, a perpetual possession. The major problem is to find a way to communicate it in art.

In her one brief essay devoted specifically to "Women in the Arts," Richardson touches upon a number of the points Woolf treats four years later in A Room of One's Own. The major difference is that for Richardson the means of expression and the conditions under which the work of art is produced constitute for the female artist a necessary but nevertheless subordinate portion of reality. Like Woolf, Richardson realizes that the female artist, because she is a woman, has problems in addition to those confronted by the male artist. Her emphasis, however, is upon the awareness of inner reality that more-than-compensates for any such difficulties.

Maintaining that women are as capable as men of significant artistic



production, Richardson thinks that economic factors, childbearing, and especially relationships with other people have interfered with performance. She concludes that "art demands what, to women, current civilization won't give." Male artists insist upon their need for peaceful surroundings and freedom from other demands upon their time and energy; they sacrifice everything and everyone to achieve the conditions most conducive to the production of their work. With good luck, Richardson adds, the male artist has at home a devoted wife, servant, or mistress who, whether with awe or scorn, sees to all the details of his daily life. The female artist, however, has no man who serves this function in her life. Nor does a female servant treat her as she does a male artist. Assuming that the female artist pursues her art out of necessity, not by choice, her servant is either hostile or sympathetic. Whichever the case, she demands a response and distracts the female artist from concentrated artistic activity. Even if she somehow minimizes her involvement in household details, she still has to cope with her involvements with other people:

There is for a Dostoyevsky writing against time on the corner of a crowded kitchen table a greater possibility of detachment than for a woman artist no matter how placed. Neither motherhood nor the more continuously exacting and indefinitely expansive responsibilities of even the simplest housekeeping can so effectively hamper her as the human demand, besieging her wherever she is, for an inclusive awareness, from which men, for good or ill, are exempt.<sup>1</sup>

Miriam's views reflect her creator's. In Revolving Lights, Miriam tells Hypo Wilson that she is very excited about a book called Women and Economics. He insists, contrary to one of the theses of the book, that women cannot manage successfully both families and careers. Miriam is not so certain. Women, she thinks, can and will have both careers and





families when the everyday details of domestic life are handled more efficiently. "'It's a relief to know,'" she says, "'that homes won't be always a tangle of nerve-racking heavy industries which ought to be done by men'" (III RL 378).<sup>2</sup>

She is less optimistic, however, about the human demands traditionally made upon women. Life for women, as presently arranged, delegates to them not only time-consuming, difficult physical labor in the home but the equally time and energy-consuming duty of caring for the sick and the aged. When Mr. Taunton implies that she, not he, should be the one to care for Eleanor Dear, Miriam thinks,

But you are very much mistaken in calling on me for help . . .  
'domestic work and the care of the aged and the sick'--very convenient -- all the stuffy nerve-racking never-ending things to be dumped on the woman--who are to be openly praised and secretly despised for their unselfishness--I've got twice the brain-power you have. You are something of a scholar; but there is a way in which my time is more valuable than yours. There is a way in which it is more right for you to be tied to this woman than for me. Your reading is a habit, like most men's reading, not a quest (II Tun 279; cf 282).

Responsibility for such duties should be determined, Miriam suggests, on an individual basis, not on the basis of sex.

Neither Woolf's Lily Briscoe nor her Orlando confronts the problem of earning her living. By the time Richardson's Miriam Henderson takes seriously her long-nurtured idea of writing, she has a room of her own and considerable encouragement from Hypo Wilson, but she also has to spend great quantities of time and energy as a dentist's "Jill of all trades" in order to earn a minimal living. Her exhausting schedule and meager diet at times threaten her health. She has only her very limited free time on the job as well as evenings and holidays to work on translating or other writing. Pilgrimage is not, however, the portrait of a female artist who is frustrated and bitter because she cannot achieve



the conditions conducive to the production of her art. Miriam accepts practical problems such as insufficient time and money and occasional ill-health and overcomes them as best she can. In fact, she finds her way of life, whatever its drawbacks, preferable to the lives of women she knows who are freed from financial difficulties by traditional marriages. Women's relationships with men, especially in marriage, interest Miriam because of their implications for the expression of women's values in art both on a practical and, for want of a better adjective, a spiritual level. In her treatment of this issue Richardson comes closest to Woolf's insistence that external circumstances can have debilitating effects upon the inner life of the female artist. Whereas Woolf emphasizes the self-doubts that result from a confrontation with pervasive masculine values, however, Richardson emphasizes the frustration that results from a confrontation with the pervasive ignorance of feminine values. Her inner certainty is unshaken.

The emphasis on woman's awareness of the stable inner life governs Miriam's examination of woman's role in the marriage relationships that exist around her. She finds that marriage as currently defined does not foster the woman's production of art. Like Lily Briscoe she observes the demands a traditional marriage makes on a woman's time and energy. Marriage as traditionally constituted, however, makes demands even more destructive. The young Miriam, watching her sisters get married after the financial catastrophe in the Henderson family, sees marriage as a source of economic security and freedom from the struggle to earn a living, as a source of protection from fears of being alone, and as a source of identity and belonging (I Bw 341-2; I Hc 409, 465-7). Before long, however, she decides that the price paid for economic security is





too high. The "sheltered life" is attained at the cost of personal freedom (II Tun 89-92; IV DLH 184). She realizes, moreover, that married women remain lonely as they move through life with men who neither understand nor value them. The two ominous pictures Miriam finds in Gerald and Harriett's new house portray the separation existing between man and woman at all stages of their relationship (I Hc 449). Finally, the attainment of a socially-acceptable identity is paid for by the apparent submergence of the woman's identity in that of her husband. Because Perseus rescues Andromeda from the monster, Miriam thinks, "she would have to be grateful to him all her life and smile and be Mrs. Perseus" (I Hc 459). In marriage as traditionally constituted, in other words, the feminine consciousness is neither recognized nor valued. The married female artist who wishes to give that consciousness expression usually functions in a spiritually alien environment.

In that environment she is reduced to a mindless body good only for reproducing the race. Miriam is no more willing to be determined by the fact that women are the bearers of children than she is willing to be determined by external legal, economic, and social restrictions. She wishes she could destroy the whole of western literature with its false idea of women and curtail the admiration of the uncritical educational institutions that perpetuate the falsehood. The modern men who accumulate scientific facts to support their contention that women are inferior to men she finds even more offensive than their predecessors. A portion of her extremely violent reaction is worth quoting since this resentment lies behind much of what she has to say in Pilgrimage about art and female artist.





Boys and girls were much the same . . . women stopped being people and went off into hideous processes. What for? . . . Development. The wonders of science. The wonders of science for women are nothing but gynaecology--all those frightful operations in the British Medical Journal and those jokes--the hundred golden rules . . . . Sacred functions . . . highest possibilities . . . sacred for what? The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world? The Future of the Race? What world? What race? Men . . . . Nothing but men; for ever.

If, by one thought, all the men in the world could be stopped, shaken, and slapped. There must, somewhere, be some power that could avenge it all . . . but if these men were right, there was not. Nothing but Nature and her decrees. Why was nature there? Who started it? If nature 'took good care' this and that . . . there must be somebody. If there was a trick, there must be a trickster. If there is a god who arranged how things should be between men and women, and just let it go and go on I have no respect for him. I should like to give him a piece of my mind. . . .

It will all go on as long as women are stupid enough to go on bringing men into the world . . . even if civilized women stop the colonials and primitive races would go on. It is a nightmare.

They invent a legend to put the blame for the existence of humanity on woman and, if she wants to stop it, they talk about the wonders of civilization and the sacred responsibilities of motherhood. They can't have it both ways. They also say women are not logical.

They despise women and they want to go on living--to reproduce--themselves. None of their achievements, no 'civilization,' no art, no science can redeem that. There is no pardon possible for man. The only answer to them is suicide; all women ought to agree to commit suicide (II Tun 220-1).

So angry is Miriam that she wishes the perpetuation of human life on the terms men have established to be halted altogether. On a limited level, Pilgrimage itself is an attempt to "avenge it all," to give the trickster responsible for the relationship between the sexes enough pieces of the mind of Miriam Henderson to prove that women are more than gynaecology and that the lauded achievements of men, based upon a foundation of such gross injustice, are blighted.

Miriam encounters the charge that women are inferior and the contempt that accompanies it so frequently that she concludes it to be almost universal (III D1 50-1, 68, 77; III RL 256). Like Sinclair, she accuses



doctors, particularly those studying gynaecology, of viewing women merely as childbearers (e.g. II Tun 274, II Int 386-7). In lengthy arguments with both Michael Shatov and Hypo Wilson, she insists that her own life and the lives of women in general consist of more than reproducing the race; she would rather die, she says, than be confined to that minimal level of existence. However much Miriam admires feminine wisdom and values, she obviously does not associate them with motherhood or with any of the physiological characteristics that differentiate women from men. Having a child, she admits, may provide a woman with certain insights in addition to the fundamental metaphysical certainty, that she, as a woman, possesses. Nevertheless, in the context of that certainty, the experience of childbearing remains incidental, instinctual, and, like the instinct of self-preservation, not even distinctively human (cf III D1 152; IV CH 331). Ultimately she is fond of her sisters' and her friends' children, but she is angry about the discomfort and fear that her young, pregnant sister experiences (II Tun 227). Miriam herself has an ecstatic moment when she thinks that she is pregnant, but then she thinks of the enormous physical suffering and the innumerable difficult adjustments that threaten her way of life (IV CH 300). She is more likely to associate childbirth with physical disease and evil than with well-being and good (III RL 249).

Miriam's rejection of the notion that women are merely reproducers of the race also takes the form of an attack on the statement by Byron so frequently quoted to explain women's lack of achievement in the arts: "'Man's love is of man's life a thing apart--'tis woman's whole existence.'" Richardson anticipates Woolf's ironic attack on the statement in Orlando, where the biographer-narrator of Orlando's life, with male





novelists for his authorities, defines love as the sexual act, measures Orlando against the poet's statement that "Love. . .is woman's whole existence," and finds her wanting. Miriam, certain that a woman's life means more than playing a charming, subordinate feminine role in order to attract an insensitive, egocentric man, attacks more directly. She objects to Byron's "calm patronizing" tone and concludes that he and men in general are hopelessly ignorant (II Tun 27). When his words recur in her thoughts, she decides that his statement is true, to man's discredit, however, rather than to woman's. If "'Man's love is of man's life a thing apart. . .'" Miriam thinks, then "so much the worse for man; there must be something very wrong with his life" (II Tun 187). A passage in Deadlock explains what she means. Miriam concludes that men too often separate their minds from their bodies. They relate only with their bodies to women perceived only as bodies (III DL 208). Amabel and Miriam agree "'that the way all down the ages men have labelled their sexual impulses 'woman' is quite monstrous'" (IV DLH 246). Byron's statement, therefore, suggests to Miriam more than men's need for meaningful occupations in addition to their relationships with women. It suggests a denial of a similar need in women based upon a more fundamental denial of the reality that women perceive and represent. Men's other activities, art among them, suffer from this ignorance.

Miriam encounters the pervasive skepticism about female artistic ability in Deadlock. The experience parallels her confrontation with the encyclopedia index. This time she is angered by T.W.H. Crosland's anti-feminist book entitled Lovely Woman. Crosland thinks that

Because some women had corns, feminine beauty was a myth; because the world could do without Mrs. Hemans's poetry, women should confine their attention to puddings and babies. The infernal complacent



cheek of it. This was the kind of thing middle-class men read. Unable to criticize it, they thought it witty and unanswerable. That was the worst of it...It ought to be illegal to publish a book by a man without first giving it to a woman to annotate. But what was the answer to men who called women inferior because they had not invented or achieved in science or art? On whose authority had men decided that science and art were greater than anything else? The world could not go on until this question had been answered. Until then, until it had been clearly explained that men were always and always partly wrong in all their ideas, life would be full of poison and secret bitterness (III D1 50-1).

The answer, of course, is the feminine aesthetics Miriam evolves and Richardson uses to present that evolution. Like Woolf, Miriam objects to the male conclusion that women cannot produce significant art and ought to confine themselves to being wives and mothers. But instead of excusing woman's lack of achievement by merely pointing to environmental factors, Miriam repeatedly questions the value men have placed upon both art and science.

Miriam's continually reaffirmed conclusion that traditional marriage and the acknowledgement or expression of woman's values are incompatible is borne out both by the marriages she observes and by those she avoids. Pilgrimage is filled with unsatisfactory marriages, some only glimpsed, some explored in more detail. In the cases of the Corries, the Cravens, and the Kronens in Honeycomb, lonely wives are treated with contempt for possessing the very qualities which originally attracted their husbands (I Hc 427, 438-9, 443). Miriam's sister Harriett's marriage as well as those of most of her lodgers are failures (III D1 94). The English woman married to a Jewish man is "alone in her circling day" (III D1 229). Equally lonely are the two plump, middle-aged Swiss women Miriam observes on the train in Oberland (IV 0 19) and the sobbing young





girl, rooming with her husband in the same house as Miriam and Miss Holland (III Trap 459). In that house, too, the Perrances fight, throw things, and curse (III Trap 508-9). Mrs. Harcourt responded to her late husband's selfishness with efforts to please him (IV 0 46), while Eleanor Dear tries to dominate hers (III RL 285).

Miriam is particularly struck by the relative failure of two marriages, her mother's and Amabel's. Both failures result from continual enforced contact with male values and with male condescension toward women. Describing the relationship between her parents, Miriam comes closest to Woolf's emphasis. In a situation that anticipates Mrs. Ramsay's, Miriam's mother is the victim of self-doubt and feelings of inferiority. Like Mrs. Ramsay, Mrs. Henderson has given herself to her husband and family. She never has had time for anything she as an individual might have wanted to do either for herself or for the larger society. As a result, she feels both guilty and unfulfilled. Hearing her mother define her life as "useless," Miriam is surprised by the thought that "There was something she had always wanted, for herself . . . even mother. . ." (I Hc 472). All that Mrs. Henderson can say, however, is "'I might have done something for the poor'" (I HC 473).

Her mother politely pretends interest when Miriam talks, she notices, just as her father pretended interest all through their married life in her mother's conversation. Like Mr. Ramsay, Mr. Henderson thinks of his wife's intelligence with condescension and even contempt.

Her mother read 'the leaders' in the evening--'excellent leader' she sometimes said, and her father would put down his volume of Proceedings of the British Association, or Herbert Spencer's First Principles, and condescendingly agree. But any discussion generally ended in his warning her not to believe a thing because she saw it in print, and a reminder that before she married she had thought that everything she saw in print was true, and quite often he would





go on to general remarks about the gullibility of women, bringing in the story of the two large long-necked pearly transparent drawing-room vases with stems and soft masses of roses and leaves painted on their sides that she had given too much for at the door to a man who said they were Italian (I Bw 234).

Miriam's detailed recollection of the vases suggests that she understands why her mother bought them, whatever Mr. Henderson was told. She remembers her father's "neighing laugh" and imagines it recurring with sufficient frequency to hurt and shame her mother into submission to his opinions (I Bw 234-5). Only Miriam glimpses what in her mother never fit the mold of her husband's mind into which she was pressed. Mrs. Ramsay seems able to quell her doubts and cling to the traditions that justify the life she has led, but Mrs. Henderson cannot do so. Honeycomb ends with her suicide. Indeed, we almost begin to wonder how Mrs. Ramsay, whose end we are told comes "rather suddenly," died.

The marriage between Miriam's two friends, Amabel and Michael, also is unsatisfactory. Miriam and Amabel, before the marriage, together experience "completeness of being. Side by side, silent, with the whole universe between us, within us, in a way no man and woman, be they never so well mated, can ever have." Miriam is intensely aware that "in a few hours, Amabel will be isolated, for life, with an alien consciousness" (IV DH 545). She bases her conclusion that Michael Shatov's consciousness is alien upon a long relationship with him during which he has made two unwelcome proposals of marriage. The reasons for Miriam's refusals are complex and include his Jewishness.<sup>3</sup> Marriage to him, moreover, implies an acceptance of his opinion, and that of men in general, that women are mere servants of the race. Consequently, when he asks her again to marry him because he is proud that she has won his friend Lintoff's approval, she refuses again. Lintoff, she insists, mistakes her for the



kind of woman preoccupied with practical concerns and unlikely to challenge a man's ideas or uncover his hypocrisies.

'Men lean and feed [on such women] and are kept going, and in their moments of gratitude they laud women to the skies. At other moments, amongst themselves, they call them materialists, animals, half-human, imperfectly civilized creatures of instinct, sacrificed to sex. And all the time they have no suspicion of the individual life going on behind the surface.' To marry would be actually to become, as far as the outside world could see, exactly the creature men described. To go into complete solitude, marked for life as a segregated female whose whole range of activities was known; in the only way men have of knowing things (III RL 302).

Marriage, Miriam thinks, might give her a certain security and a freedom from desires, but Michael himself is a discordant element in her imagined picture. She knows he does not share her awareness of the stable inner life. The lonely years she already has spent unsuccessfully trying to penetrate the narrow view of life that imprisons him bode ill for the future (III RL 304).

The prison Miriam avoids by refusing to marry Michael encloses Amabel. Miriam's uneasiness prior to the marriage is well-founded. Blaming their lodgings and the nature of marriage in general, not Michael, Amabel admits later that she is both unhappy when he is away and happier still when he is at home. Either way, she feels trapped. "'Be glad, Mira,'" Amabel tells Miriam, "'that you can go away'" (IV MM 605). Miriam tries to decide exactly what is wrong. In marriage, she concludes, the loss of the initial rapturous relationship is less serious than "the loss of unthreatened solitude. . . . Far worse than the normal incompatibility of man and woman is the absence in their daily life of a common heritage, stating itself at every turn" (IV MM 605).

The female artist is unlikely to produce significant art if she is continually in contact with a masculine consciousness which devalues all she stands for and tries to express. She is burdened less with self-





doubt than with a sense of futility. The woman who flees solitude into a traditional marriage finds a solitude of a worse kind. Marriage, however, need not be of the traditional sort. As Lily Briscoe and Orlando discover, male-female relationships, even in marriage, can support rather than thwart the female artist. Miriam encounters two reasonably satisfactory marriages and one that is wholly admirable. The Wilsons' marriage is "a success without being an exception to the rule that all marriages are failures, as [Hypo] said" (III RL 367). Miriam rejects Hypo's world view and the role women play in it; she even wonders how Alma can feel romantic about him (III RL 367). Yet she admires the way they remain unencumbered by domestic details and the fact that they have independent lives as well as a life together (IV DLH 255). They may not share in the fullest sense because Hypo refuses to acknowledge his inner life, but they still share outside things and events (IV DLH 254; cf 248). The Lintoffs' marriage, although we see much less of it, is similarly undomesticated. To Michael they represent the possibility of marriage between Christians and Jews, but to Miriam they represent "free movement" and "an intense joyous dreamy repose" (III RL 292, 296). Relaxed and comfortable, they remain serenely indifferent to the external matters most of the couples Miriam knows make so much fuss about--furniture, clothes, manners.

The one marriage Miriam thoroughly admires is that between George and Dora Taylor. She credits their success to the fact that George has

'a feminine consciousness, though he's a most manly little man with a head like Beethoven. So he's practical. Meaning he feels with his nerves and has a perfect sympathetic imagination. . . .With [the Taylors] everything feels endless; the present I mean. They are so immediately alive. Everything and everybody is abolished. . . .And a new world is there. You feel language changing, every word moving, changed, into the new world' (III RL 372-3).



Miriam observes admiringly that Dora and George are a balance of opposites physically, but are similar and unified spiritually (III Trap 471). Unlike Amabel and Michael, they share the awareness of the state of being which, to Miriam, is reality. Their relationship anticipates her conclusion in March Moonlight that "sex-love dies unless it grows, for both partners, towards universal love" (IV MM 644). Physical attraction provides only a temporary, subhuman unity and does not tap either individual's potential. Universal love, based upon a common definition of reality, results in a meaningful marriage relationship (IV MM 645-6). If such a relationship constitutes a new world complete with new means of communicating, its benefits to the female artist, particularly if she is a writer, must be substantial. To her certainty about her own values is added the confidence that relationships between men and women can be different from what they have been. Moreover, the opportunity to participate in such a relationship provides insight into ways that a shared feminine value system might be communicated in art.

Miriam thinks of such a relationship as "a triangle. Woman and man at either end of the base, the apex: God" (IV DLH 224). Her image reflects one Richardson uses elsewhere. In an essay entitled "Leadership in Marriage," she reviews the comments of two men who advocate the leadership of the husband. He must shape the woman's "abundant vitality." Richardson does not disagree with the fundamental differences these men find between the sexes, but she does question the implication that the man's characteristics are superior to the woman's. For the image of a processional, in which a superior husband leads an inferior wife, she substitutes the image of a triangle, in which man and woman are positioned equidistant from a shared reality.<sup>4</sup> That reality is the state of





being women are more likely than men to value.

Michael Shatov is only one of a number of potential husbands who, like Pastor Lahmann in Germany, see in Miriam "'a little wife, well-willed'" (I PR 128-9) or who are intent upon shaping her abundant vitality. All of them, Densley, Richard Roscorla, Charles Ducorroy, to name three, associate her with some aspect of the traditional feminine role she questions. Densley, for example, sees marriage as the perennial war between the sexes that the woman, in order to be happy, must lose (III Trap 468). Classifying women into seductresses, saints, and mothers, he particularly idealizes the latter (III Trap 473, 477). Marriage to him, and Miriam is attracted momentarily, involves becoming one of the many wives of professional men who, to all appearances at least, completely submerge their individuality in the lives, careers, and opinions of their husbands (II Tun 196-7, 200; IV DLH 202). Miriam's rejection of Densley leaves her with the alternatives of celibacy or free love.

Farewell to Densley is farewell to my one chance of launching into life as my people have lived it. I am left with these strangers--people without traditions, without local references, and who despise marriage, or on principle disapprove of it. And in my mind I agree. Yet affairs not ending in marriage are even more objectionable than marriage. And celibates, outside religion, though acceptable when thought of as alone, are always, socially, a little absurd. Then I must be absurd. Growing absurd. To others, I am already absurd. . . .

Free-lovers seem all in some indefinable way shoddy. Born shoddy. Men as well as women. Marriage is not an institution, it is an intuition. Marriage, or sooner or later absurdity. Free-love is better than absurdity. . . (III Trap 495).

Having concluded as much, Miriam becomes the mistress of Hypo Wilson, the man whom she is determined to convince of the reality of the feminine consciousness. A physical element enters their relationship, but she hardly lets him reduce her to that.

Various economic, legal, social, and educational restrictions,





therefore, affect the way women behave in the external world. Such restrictions, however, do not touch their inner lives in any fundamental way. Richardson objects to the restrictions not because they prevent women from doing what men do but because they indicate and perpetuate a devaluation of the inner life and the values associated with it. She objects for the same reason to the reduction of women to reproductive mechanisms and the related charges of inferiority in all other spheres of activity.<sup>5</sup> If the female artist is to produce works of art, she must cut herself off, to a certain extent at least, from the role that society traditionally prescribes for women. Richardson and Miriam Henderson both note the pervasiveness of the human demand in the lives of women. In Pilgrimage Richardson explores in detail several aspects of this demand which she merely mentions in her essay.

The female artist who wants to reflect woman's values in her art, Miriam's experience implies, ought to marry only if she finds a man with whom she can share her definition of reality. Whatever financial benefits and social acceptance the traditional marriage offers, it also involves loss of personal freedom, a lonely life with an "alien consciousness," and acquiescence in the eyes of the world to the dominant view of women as reproductive mechanisms. Such a marriage does not damage the female artist's certainty about the stable inner life; nor does it damage her potential to express it. It does place her, however, in a frustrating situation. The person with whom she must be in frequent contact neither acknowledges nor shares what is most real to her. He neither knows nor values her in what she considers the most important sense. Moreover, given her desire to increase through her art society's awareness of the individual consciousness, marriage to such a man places her, in the eyes of those she wants to reach, in a hypocritical position.



Insisting that women are more than bodies, she yet allows herself to be valued only in that way. Like Woolf in Three Guineas, therefore, Richardson advocates a kind of mental chastity, a refusal by the female artist to compromise her right to express honestly her opinions for economic security and social approval. Richardson's Miriam actually does what Woolf says that professional women must do. She earns merely enough to remain independent and seeks no economic or social rewards that must be paid for by either silence in the face of masculine values or flattery.





G. From Either-Or to Both-And:  
May Sinclair's Female Artist-Characters

"I thought then that if I could only have Tommy and my work I should ask no more of destiny; I do not now see why I couldn't."  
Olivia in Mary Austin's A Woman of Genius (1912)

"A person must pay dearly for the divine gift of creative fire. It is as though each of us was born with a limited store of energy. In the artist, the strongest force in his make up. . . , his creativeness, will seize and all but monopolize this energy, leaving so little over that nothing of value can come of it."  
C.J. Jung, "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry" (1922)

May Sinclair's interest in the female artist centers upon the conflict between her imperious creative gift and her desire as a woman for intimate relationships with other people. Like Woolf and Richardson, Sinclair struggles to re-evaluate art and especially marriage so that, for the female artist, they are not mutually exclusive. The struggle is somewhat more difficult because Sinclair is attracted to the theory that the artist, female as well as male, is the vehicle of an overwhelming and exhausting divine force that can be denied outlet only at the greatest risk. She also insists, however, that the artist is different from other people only in degree and not in kind. His perceptions of reality may be more frequent and of greater intensity, but he perceives the same reality as numerous other people, among them heroes, lovers, philosophers, and mystics. The apparent contradiction between these two views of the artist is resolved partially by the eventual recognition of a number of her artist-characters that this overwhelming force is not imposed upon them from without but is, instead, the most real part of themselves.

In her treatment of the question of environmental versus inherent



factors in the life of the female artist, Sinclair balances the emphases of Richardson and Woolf. Like Richardson, she believes that circumstances cannot touch the female artist's potential, perhaps even cannot inhibit some expression of it. Her major treatment of this theme appears in Mary Olivier, a novel written appropriately in a manner similar to Richardson's. Richardson and Sinclair admit, however, what Woolf emphasizes, that a woman can develop her full potential both as woman and as artist only if the traditional view of woman as wife and mother and of her role as self-abnegation is modified. Such a modification does not involve a denial of her biological function as childbearer. It does involve an affirmation of her ability to channel her energies in other directions if she chooses, a recognition that her energies possibly may be expended in more than one way at once, and an acceptance of these alternatives as normal. In Sinclair's fiction, it involves a relationship first between the female artist and her parents and then between the female artist and her husband and children that does not require total self-sacrifice. Sinclair, in other words, re-examines the either-or definition of the female artist's situation and explores the possible redefinition of that situation as both-and.

Occasionally in Sinclair's fiction possessive parents, usually mothers, want to keep their sons at home. Traditionally, however, daughters are the ones not allowed to leave until they marry. For this reason Frida Tancred's father in "The Cosmopolitan" cannot understand her determination to travel (RP 314-15).<sup>1</sup> The only reasons other than marriage for a young woman to be away from home are extended visits to other such homes or stays of various lengths at girls' schools operated according to the theory of in loco parentis. For the female artist the question raised by this





seclusion is how she is to get the training necessary to master her art and the stimulus that comes from contact with other artists. In Sinclair's fiction, as in that of many of her predecessors, to write poems, play the piano, or sketch at home is acceptable for women, particularly if they do not take art seriously or perform too well. The fact that Frida Tancred in "The Cosmopolitan," who has a horror of doing anything badly, refuses to dabble in the arts suggests the level of proficiency usually achieved. Even considerable skill may be admired, as in the case of Lucia Harden in The Divine Fire, if a woman has no professional aspirations. Like Woolf's Rachel Vinrace in The Voyage Out, Lucia neglects her other studies and pursues her interest in music. Her grandfather allows her to do so, however, only because he is contemptuous of woman's intellectual capacity and defines music as primarily emotional.

If a young woman in Sinclair's fiction has a serious and professional attitude toward her art, immediately she encounters emotional blackmail and numerous objections. Mollie Allingham in The Allinghams (1927), for example, wants to go to London where she thinks she can get the training necessary to become a professional concert pianist. Her parents, who think she plays sufficiently well already, insist that her wanting to leave home for any reason other than marriage means that she does not love them. Moreover, they assume that her inevitable marriage will mean the end of any career she might establish for herself. That Mollie may have the capacity to love her parents, her future husband, and her professional career is not considered, even by Mollie. She chooses her parents over her music but observes that if they loved her as much as she loves them, they would not stand in her way. Mollie's fiancé, who does love her enough to let her pursue her career, still is uncomfortable when





he thinks of her travel, public appearances, and involvement in a life that does not include him. The love that enables him to want for his fiancée what she wants for herself is combined with the traditional notions that the female performing artist needs protection, wants to display herself in public, and ought to direct her energies only toward her husband and home. Mollie, convinced again that she must make an either-or choice, chooses Richard over her music.

Mollie's situation can be interpreted in more than one way. The suggestion exists in the novel, particularly in the person of her Aunt Martha, that Mollie should not be forced by the conventional views of women and of female artists to make such choices. Sinclair in her fiction as a whole, however, emphasizes the imperiousness of female as well as male genius and its ability to triumph, if only to a limited extent, over negative circumstances. She comments, for example, on the Brontës' inability to stop writing (3B 12, 29) and dramatizes in The Creators Jane Holland's similar inability. If Mollie Allingham is not likewise driven, then perhaps she is no genius. If she were, she would be more willing to sacrifice other people to her art, or, more accurately, she would be more willing to offend other people who mistakenly define themselves as sacrificed and her as heartless. Sinclair does not give the artist license to commit all sorts of exploitative and irresponsible acts. She does see genius as a demanding and largely irresistible force that makes the artist vulnerable to various criticisms and charges concerning his or her relationships with other people. Such criticisms, particularly in the case of women, are based upon traditional expectations that often are misguided.

Sinclair's major dramatization both of the debilitating circumstances



the female artist must face during the period of her development and of the ability of genius to maintain a certain degree of freedom from these circumstances is Mary Olivier (1919). Similarities exist between Mary's situation and that of several male artist-characters in Sinclair's fiction, including the two painters in "The Mahatma's Story" (1931). The Mahatma, whenever he encounters people who insist that someone is unsuccessful because he was not given a chance, tells the story of the poor and unsuccessful painter and the wealthy, successful painter who, with the help of Rama Dass, exchange memories and circumstances. They keep their own temperaments and wills, however, since the elements that constitute the self cannot be altered. The unsuccessful painter, placed in a perfect economic situation, still does no work; the successful painter remains successful in spite of his poverty. Each man ends where he began because the self, not circumstances is the determining factor.

Because the novel begins with Mary's infancy, not with her teens as is the case with Richardson's Pilgrimage, similarities also exist between Mary's early experiences and those of Lawrence's Paul Morel and Joyce's Stephen Dedalus. All three must define their relation to the social values to which they are exposed. Unlike the painters in "The Mahatma's Story" and unlike Paul and Stephen, however, Mary continually confronts the view that learning or the enthusiastic pursuit of excellence in any sphere other than the domestic is improper for a woman. The major representative of this attitude is Mary's mother, a powerful figure whose role in the novel is more like Mrs. Ramsay's in Woolf's To the Lighthouse, published eight years later, than like anyone Richardson's Miriam encounters, her mother included. Mrs. Olivier, like Mrs. Ramsay, represents





a traditional view of woman's role, incompatible with that of woman as artist. Like Lily Briscoe, Mary Olivier must assess the values of this influential older woman before she can function successfully as an artist. As in the case of Lily, affection combined with resentment provide a barrier to clear evaluation. Both women, however, persevere and refuse to give up their art, Mary, because of Sinclair's de-emphasis on circumstances, with fewer feelings of inferiority than Lily.

Mrs. Olivier's continual advocacy of self-abnegation, of the renouncing of one's will, is identified, more in the manner of Butler's The Way of All Flesh than of To the Lighthouse, with traditional Christianity. Her attempt in God's name to break Mary's will and Mary's resistance is a fundamental conflict in the book. God's will, interpreted by Mrs. Olivier, is that Mary should renounce her will and her self, submit to her mother's instruction, and be contented with the usual domestic labors of women. Again and again, she advises Mary to remain inside the house diligently sewing and cooking. Housework, however, perpetually leaves her mind unsatisfied. Mary fights her mother, although she dislikes doing so, because she senses that her personal identity, her very self, is at stake. She concludes that her mother's hatred of and desire to destroy the real self in other people is the unpardonable sin. "'Selves are sacred.'" she insists, not despicable as her mother teaches. "'We were brought up all wrong,'" she says. "'Taught that our selves were beastly, that our wills were beastly and that everything we liked was bad. Taught to sit on our wills, to be afraid of our selves and not trust them for a single minute'" (MO 250-2; cf 124, 249-50).

Mary's self is identified in the novel with both her scholarly and



artistic activities. Her enormous intellectual curiosity and enthusiasm results in attempts at self-education. She is not given the educational opportunities of her brothers; nevertheless, books are readily available. Her father's library contains standard literary works and, when some of those considered unsuitable for a young girl are moved out of her reach or hidden altogether, she simply begins on others. Her brothers leave their old textbooks at home. Friends occasionally get her books from circulating libraries. Her mother, however, considers learning inappropriate for a girl. This problem is complicated by the fact that the literary and metaphysical works that attract Mary confirm her doubts about her mother's traditional Christianity. Mrs. Olivier's reaction to Mary's studying is complex. Apparently she is convinced of woman's intellectual inferiority. At least she has governed her own life by that assumption and, like Woolf's Mrs. Ramsay, fears any challenge to it. Any woman, she thinks, who enthusiastically pursues knowledge must not be serious or gifted, only hypocritical and vain. She thinks, like those who scorn the female actress or concert musician, that such a woman merely wants to display herself before others. Mrs. Olivier also insists, not without foundation, that men do not like women with minds. Eventually she admits, however, that she is jealous of Mary's cleverness and that she had wanted her boys, not her girl, to achieve intellectually.

Mary's brief experience with girls' schools reinforces her mother's values. Mary attends a conventional school where the girls mock her enthusiasm for her studies and are scandalized by her religious doubts. Like her mother, they think she merely shows off, that her commitment merely is vanity and impertinence. Again the assumption is that a woman can neither be serious about learning nor gifted. She must concentrate





on being well-liked, and to be well-liked, she must act like the other girls. Mary, however, continues to devote herself to her studies. At her second school she wins the literature, French, and German prizes, giving up the good conduct prize so that she will not get them all. That renunciation is for Mary the easiest, yet it displeases her Uncle Victor who obviously considers the good conduct prize the only one worth having for a girl.

The self that Mary keeps free from the impress of circumstances also is identified with her art. Mary initially sees the piano as the means by which she can express her intuitions of reality. Her playing is a challenge flung at circumstances that require her accommodation to a world of values she despises. But her playing, on the whole, is frustrated. Her mother continually tells her that if she must play at all, she must play gently so that the whole village will not hear her. Again the implication is that Mary plays out of affectation and vanity, primarily to exhibit herself. If her mother does not inhibit her or stop her, her irritable, alcoholic father does. When she waits patiently until he leaves the house, the look in her mother's eyes reproaches her for caring about her playing more than about her father. The music Mary wants to play, therefore, usually resounds inside of her, unexpressed. Continually denied outlet on the piano, that music finds expression in a less-obtrusive manner, in poetry: "She would never play well. At any minute her father's voice or her mother's eyes would stiffen her fingers and stop them. She knew what she would do; she had always known. She would make poems. They couldn't hear you making poems. They couldn't see your thoughts falling into sound patterns" (MO 184). They only can interrupt her, as her mother does, with queries about why she sits





alone in her cold room and later with queries about what she intends to do with the poems overflowing her drawers. They only can fear, as her mother does, for the sinful consequences of her daughter becoming a published poet and coming into contact with other writers and artists. They only can demand her continual presence and care, as her mother does, when finally Mary does achieve some recognition.

Like Miriam Henderson, Mary Olivier does not marry. Among the few men who share her intellectual interests and even admire her intelligence, one leaves the country, one is married already, and two ultimately prove disappointing intellectually or morally. Often marriage would involve the sacrifice of another person. In the case of Richard Nicholson, who has the mind Mary always wanted to find in a man, her mother is the obstacle. Mary can neither leave her nor bring her to live in London. She can neither see Nicholson and her mother living together, nor face being responsible for any living arrangements that distract him from his work. She decides that, under the circumstances, less courage is required to become his mistress than to marry him. For a short time, therefore, she stays with him in his London flat and meets literary people for the first time. Back at home with her mother, who is senile and needs continual watching, Mary can no longer write. Moreover, shortly before her mother's death, which would have freed her to marry Nicholson, he forms an unhappy alliance with an older woman he has known for years. Mary, not wanting to hurt his wife, chooses not to interfere. Like Richardson's Miriam, however, she is fundamentally happy with her metaphysical certainty and the scholarly and artistic pursuits related to it no matter what circumstantial deprivations she must endure.<sup>2</sup>



Mary Olivier's major difficulty is combining the traditional role of dutiful daughter with her individual life as a scholar and artist. Sinclair's other female artist-characters confront another version of the same problem, the conflict between the traditional role of dutiful wife and artist. Practically all of her artist-characters, male and female, fall in love. In most cases the experience is beneficial to art. The more worthy the object of love, however, the more beneficial the experience. Ted Haviland's love for Audrey Craven, for example, and even more so, Keith Rickman's for Lucia Harden, bridge the gap between airy idealism and the concrete, external world. At the same time, if such a woman is unsympathetic, she can threaten the artist's career, as Audrey Craven, like her predecessors in numerous artist novels, threatens Ted Haviland's. Most of Sinclair's male artist-characters, however, like Stephen Allingham in The Allinghams, Maurice Durant in "The Cosmopolitan," and Owen Prothero in The Creators, find women who not only inspire but encourage the expression of that inspiration in art. Sinclair's female artist-characters are not so lucky.

The experience of passion for the artist in Sinclair's fiction is one thing. Marriage and family quite often is another. In The Creators, Caro Bickersteth, the journalist, advises geniuses to avoid marriage. This position, judging from Sinclair's fiction as a whole as well as from The Creators itself, is not hers. Her conclusion is closer to George Tanqueray's. He says that "'the unpardonable sin in a great artist--isn't so much marrying as marrying the wrong person'" (C 469). Among her male artist-characters, Stephen Allingham and Owen Prothero marry the right persons, women who love their husbands as total persons including the element of genius that at times so totally consumes them.





Keith Rickman almost marries the wrong person and George Tanqueray actually does so. Both men involve themselves with women who appeal to their senses and hearts, but not to their intellects. More gentle than Anne in Shaw's Man and Superman, both women nevertheless instinctively desire to build nests and fill them with children. Rickman's Flossie does so only by marrying another man, and Tanqueray's Rose remains in this respect unsatisfied. Both men realize, Tanqueray too late, that they need women who are their equals, not their dependents, who keep pace with them in all things.

When Sinclair's female artist-characters fall in love, the experience, as in the cases of her male artist-characters, usually is beneficial to art. Love gives their work the passionate, sensual, flesh-and-blood dimension that tradition has taught women to deny. The consequences of falling in love, however, are more complicated than they are for male artists. For a woman, falling in love generally means marriage, motherhood, and self-sacrifice. Avoiding or ignoring the demands of the people close to her is more difficult for a woman trained in that tradition than it is for a man, and any deviation is more likely to be criticized. In this context Tanqueray's warning against marrying the wrong person has added meaning. Where is the female artist to find the male equivalent of the inspiring and encouraging woman? Where is she to find a man who loves her as a total person including the element of genius that at times totally consumes her? If Sinclair's female artists find such men, they rarely are fortunate enough to marry them. In a transitional period during which marriages which facilitate rather than inhibit the female artist's work are uncommon, Sinclair can provide no clear answers to these questions.



She deals briefly with the problem already in her first novel, Audrey Craven (1897). Katherine Haviland's paintings lack a human quality before her isolated life is complicated first by her love for her brother and then by her love for Vincent Hardy. In a conversation with the latter she begins to consider the conflict between, as she puts it, the "love of art" and the "art of love" (AC 311). Vincent thinks that, in her vacillation between the two, her present attempt to thwart the woman in order to develop the artist is worse than an attempt to develop the woman at the expense of the artist. Since she must make a choice, she ought to ready herself to love the man who eventually will ask her to marry him. Otherwise, he warns, "'all the success in the world won't make up to you for the happiness you have missed'" (AC 301-2).

His advice anticipates Mrs. Ramsay's to Lily Briscoe in To the Lighthouse. Like Lily, Katherine responds to such advice with painfully mixed feelings, although the ingredients are not the same. Vincent, who loves Audrey Craven, is not aware that Katherine loves him, a fact that gives peculiar meaning to his advice. She has, at least at the moment, no clear choice between developing herself as a woman and developing herself as an artist. On a practical level the choice is made for her because her love is unrequited, but the essential conflict remains unresolved. She is pleased because her love gives her knowledge and her painting new depth. At the same time, Vincent's warning that success as an artist is no substitute for love recurs with the persistence of Tansley's and Mrs. Ramsay's words in Lily's mind.

The novel suggests, however, that the artist in Katherine must have a legitimate outlet; otherwise she may channel those energies into





directions detrimental both to herself and to others. The temporary sacrifice of her career for her brother's, for example, is neither entirely self-abnegating, nor in his best interests. Instead of living for and creating art, she lives for and creates her brother's career, resenting the influence of anyone else as bitterly as she would resent the hand of anyone else meddling with her favorite painting. She also renders him overly-dependent. Realizing that her relationship with Vincent Hardy, whom she saves from self-destruction through drink and other vices, has a similar dimension, Katherine asks herself, "Was she not an artist before everything, as he had said?" (AC 311). If she does not have sufficient opportunity to manipulate color and line upon canvas, she will manipulate human elements and, with her eye upon the creation she envisions, ignore the preferences and needs of the individuals involved.

The conflict in Katherine Haviland between artist and woman ultimately must be considered within the context of the androgeneity which, like Woolf and, as we shall see, like Richardson, Sinclair attributes to the artist. Her fiction contains numerous women who value themselves as individuals, develop their minds, strengthen their bodies, and enter into hitherto masculine realms of activity. Like Woolf's Orlando, they look for mates with feminine as well as masculine qualities. Among Sinclair's female artist-characters, however, the masculine and feminine qualities are as often in conflict as they are in balance. Katherine Haviland is credited with a charm that is "super-feminine." The narrator explains that "among all artists there is a strain of manhood in every woman, and of womanhood in every man" (AC 92). The womanhood in Katherine, therefore, is part of a larger whole. The conflict is not





so much between woman and artist as it is between the feminine and masculine elements within the androgynous person who is the artist. Katherine's womanhood nourishes her art by keeping her in touch with the human, but it also remains to some extent unsatisfied. The masculine faculty enables her to give expression to the insight her womanhood brings, but it also requires that she remain to some extent detached from other people.

The idea of two sexes in conflict within the female artist is developed by Nina Lempriere, one of the women writers in The Creators. Genius, she says, is

"giving you another sex inside you, and a stronger one, to plague you. When we want a thing we can't sit still like a woman and wait till it comes to us, or doesn't come. We go after it like a man; and if we can't get it peaceably we fight for it, as a man fights when he isn't a coward or a fool. And because we fight we're done for. And then, when we're down, the woman in us turns and rends us. But if we got what we wanted we'd be just like any other woman. As long," she added, "as we wanted it. . . .It's borne in on me," she said, "that the woman in us isn't meant to matter. She's simply the victim of the Will-to-do-things. It puts the bit into our mouths and drives us the way we must go. It's like a whip laid across our shoulders whenever we turn aside" (C 105).

Jane Holland, in contrast to Nina Lempriere, at times refuses to believe that her womanhood must be the victim of the masculine will-to-do-things. After her third child dies, for example, Jane, shattered, tries to reassemble herself without including "the dangerous, disintegrating, virile element" (C 448). Both Nina and Jane discover, in their different ways, that they can destroy neither the man nor the woman in them. That they define their genius as masculine apparently is due to the fact that they are women. Tanqueray, because he is a man, defines his genius as feminine and the creative process as fertilization, gestation, and birth. Their definitions taken together indicate that genius is both masculine



and feminine, that it is an ability to perceive and a need to express an ultimately sexless reality.

Sinclair's most thorough treatment of the conflict within the female artist is in The Creators (1910), a relatively traditional novel in which an unobtrusive omniscient author presents six artist-characters, three male and three female. Sinclair subordinates herself to what she considers of primary importance, the consciousnesses of her individual characters, without going so far as Woolf does when she reduces the narrative voice to the mere provider of explanatory clues as the reader moves from one of several individual consciousnesses to another. One question the novel raises in this manner is whether the female artist's masculine and feminine faculties might complement rather than compete with each other. The three women writers in the novel represent three different approaches to an answer, none of which is entirely satisfactory. The number of variables involved makes generalization beyond each woman's individual case difficult. One of the most important variables is the kind of man with whom the female artist falls in love. Also important are her ability, the degree of her commitment to art, the strength of her desire to fulfill herself as a woman, as well as her physical and psychological strength. Nina Lempriere, who insists upon the inevitable rivalry of the masculine and feminine faculties and the victimization of the latter by the former, remains unmarried. Laura Gunning's marriage to Owen Prothero, another artist, seems satisfactory except for the fact that she is not a great artist and uses her small gift to facilitate the expression of her husband's greater one. Jane Holland marries a man who, although he has some appreciation of art, is not himself an artist and who envisions a more-or-less traditional





domestic life. The novel concludes with the suggestion that if Jane had married not Hugh Brodrick but George Tanqueray, another novelist, the faculties of a great female artist might not have been in conflict. Tanqueray, however, sees only the genius in Jane and recognizes the woman too late.

Sinclair's The Creators tests Nina's assertion to Jane that if they or "'any woman is to do anything stupendous, it means virginity'" (C 106). The outcome of the test is ambiguous. Nina and Jane agree that if their genius is worth anything they will have to pay for it in ways that George Tanqueray will not. He can marry and still follow the dictates of his genius. As Nina says and the novel shows, if anyone pays, his wife will. So long as marriage for women means a wide range of family duties as well as the bearing and rearing of children, it constitutes a serious threat to their art. The contrast between Nina, who does not marry, and Jane, who does, indicates that both women pay. Jane, who marries a traditional man from a traditional family and has children, perhaps pays more because her physical as well as psychological well-being is at issue. Virginity, therefore, may have a slight edge over the traditional marriage. Both women produce excellent work, but Nina is more likely than Jane to continue to do so. The contrast between the two women does not prove, however, that virginity for the female artist is preferable to alternate kinds of intimate human relationships or marriages. Even the changes that occur within Jane's marriage point in a new direction.

Nina's statement does not take into account the individual characteristics of female artists. Temperamentally, Nina and Jane are very different. Jane's warm, sympathetic interest in people keeps her



more-or-less continually involved with them while Nina's wild and solitary independence is broken only by a few significant periods of total, passionate involvement. Nina's temperament perhaps makes virginity suitable for her. Sinclair presents her as a modern Diana, a huntress and an athlete at home among forests and mountains (C 102, 307). Continually associated with wild birds or beasts, or with raw natural forces (C 180, 59, 76, 231), she thinks of her extremely powerful passions as a wild beast within. If she cannot control it, it will destroy other people or thwart her genius. Nina writes between bouts with the beast, and the quality of her art depends upon the degree of her victory. She pays a heavy price psychologically, but by the end of the novel, she is undivided in her commitments. Ultimately thankful for her suffering, she is increasingly certain of her artistic power and her destiny. She only doubts her course when she sees the success Jane achieves in spite of her inhibiting circumstances (C 378).

The beast that Laura Gunning fights initially is not passion but poverty. Tanqueray, who says that the artist must keep free of families, points out that if he and Jane have accomplished anything it is because both of their families have rejected them (C 11). In contrast, Laura's family, her declining old father, requires that she exhaust herself doing journalistic writing in order to support them. Laura is a small woman whose ability is less than Nina's or Jane's; nevertheless, she wants to develop it as fully as possible. In order to perfect her short stories and short novels in an environment that gives her neither solitude, silence, nor financial stability, she first must write her paragraphs for the papers, then stay up far into the night writing for her own satisfaction (C 204; 215). By the time her father dies, such a





schedule practically has destroyed her both physically and psychologically.

Her subsequent marriage to Owen Prothero, however, affects her quite differently. Marriage divides neither her nor her husband from their art, perhaps because they are both artists, perhaps because they are sufficient to each other and both want to produce books rather than children. The main reason for her satisfaction, however, is the fact that she can use her art financially to encourage the working of her husband's larger genius. What he produces in this way is a product of their combined efforts and the "consumation beyond consumation of their marriage" (C 430). Laura has to persuade Prothero, however, that her happiness depends upon putting her gift at the disposal of his. He feels guilty, and is made to feel so by the Brodricks and other conventional people, because his wife supports him. After Prothero's death, when her work no longer is needed to support his, Laura stops writing altogether. She dedicates her energies to editing his poems and memoirs in an attempt to prove to a misguided public her husband's worth.

Laura's is one solution to the problem of the female artist's desire to fulfil herself both as woman and as artist, but to generalize from her situation is as difficult as to generalize from Nina's. What would have happened had Laura been more gifted and less willing to subordinate her career to her husband's? Jane Holland's situation provides some indication. Given her inability to keep from getting involved with people, her friends all prophesy disastrous consequences for her art should she marry, especially if the man is Hugh Brodrick. Jane's experience of unrequited love for Tanqueray causes her initially to agree with them. Like Nina, she experiences passion, then frustration and





suffering, then the turning of her energies to art. So alive to her is the central character of her next novel that he completely occupies the gap Tanqueray leaves in her life. She even calculates that during the year she will need to finish the book she will be free of her passion.<sup>3</sup> With the relief that this realization brings, Jane discovers a dawning affection for the genius she had disliked because Tanqueray loves it and not the woman in her. Genius, she decides, works just as Nina says it does; it rewards the artist handsomely for the suffering and frustration she endures when she renounces all else (C 116-17). The quality of Jane's art, like Nina's, depends upon the degree to which she conquers her passion. Her best work is the result of "a heavenly silence, a virgin solitude, and a creator possessed by no power except the impulse to create" (C 117).

Jane's silence, solitude, and desire to create, however, are threatened in two ways. The first threat is celebrity. When the novel begins she already is a well-known novelist innundated with invitations and requests for favors. She does not like to offend anyone, but she is convinced that if these demanding and ingratiating people cared about her work as much as they profess, they would leave her alone to produce it (C 120). A more serious threat is Hugh Brodrick and his family. Tanqueray can tear up and burn all of the notes and invitations littering her writing table, but he cannot prevent her marriage. Jane herself struggles against it. She argues, for example, with the Brodrick women who insist that childbearing and rearing give women knowledge. Jane insists that, on the contrary, the experience obliterates knowledge by demanding nothing but feeling. She minimizes the value of experience for the artist, in this case the experience of motherhood (C 268).<sup>4</sup>



Tanqueray supports her. He insists that what is necessary to the Brodrick women is not necessary to her, however often she may experience moments when she doubts it. Such moments, he says, are temporary and will pass. The impulse to create works of art, however, is permanent and real. Women who say otherwise, he insists, are sentimentalists (C 269).

Jane, nevertheless, is attracted to the Brodricks precisely because they recognize in her what Tanqueray will not (C 12, 86, 90-1). The Brodricks see her primarily as a woman. They appreciate her genius to the extent that it saves Hugh's Monthly Review, but in general they pity her for having it, for having to work, and for having no home or family. To supply the lack, they invite her to their Sunday family gatherings. Hugh, like his family, sees Jane primarily as a woman. Living alone and liking it may be acceptable for Tanqueray but for a woman it is "'horrible'" (C 73). He neither likes her to talk about her writing nor to work hard at it even for the sake of his review. Jane's decision to marry him clearly is a choice of the woman over the artist in her life.

Just as she is dissatisfied with Tanqueray's refusal to recognize her womanhood, however, so she ultimately is dissatisfied with the Brodricks' tendency to ignore her genius. Continually she must insist that she can be both woman and artist within a climate of opinion that makes allowances only for the former and that considers the latter self-indulgent and neurotic. Increasingly she recognizes that the genius which she had considered peripheral in her life is, as Tanqueray warned, central and indestructible. She vacillates between immersion in wife and motherhood and immersion in art. The rare moments when her two commitments balance come as a result of certain departures from the traditional female role that enable her to both write and attend to her





family. Hugh makes these adjustments somewhat reluctantly, and his family is extremely critical of them; nevertheless, adjustments are made.

The portion of Jane's marriage presented in the novel includes the production of three books, one of which is bad, and the birth of three children, one of whom dies. The counterpointing of books and babies illustrates the extent to which the production of both is necessary and normal for Jane, even though she cannot do both at once. Early in her married life Jane, immersed in wife and motherhood, produces a bad book and a healthy child. The book, which she begins before she falls in love with Brodrick and reluctantly finishes afterwards for the sake of his review, evidences a decline in quality that disturbs her blissful state of mind. "'It's as if I'd brought something deformed and horrible into the world,'" Jane tells her husband (C 292). Her first baby, although it is born prematurely because of Jane's hysterics after a quarrel with her husband over one of her artist-friends, is healthy. She spends the next half-year concentrating only upon him, much to the Brodrick family's surprise and admiration (C 324). Just when Brodrick pronounces his wife wholly fulfilled, however, she becomes restless and begins to think of a book. Brodrick, the narrator tells us, is less convinced that she cannot do both than he is afraid of losing complete possession of her (C 328). As yet he does not consider either relinquishing her attention only to repossess it or removing some of the burdens of the domestic half of her double commitment so that she has more energy to expend on him.

The fatigue and depression resulting from Jane's attempts to occupy herself solely with house and family in accordance with her husband's wishes culminate in the first concession made to her desire to write.



Actually, it is made as much in Brodrick's self-interest as in hers. Efficiency is important to him, and Jane never has been able to run the house to his satisfaction. She suggests, therefore, that his capable former housekeeper return, relieve her of this burden, and restore domestic calm and order. Gertrude Collett, repeatedly credited with goodness and self-sacrifice (C 407, 417, 418, 461), becomes "'the Angel of the Dinner'" (C 390). Whether Woolf knew Sinclair's work or whether both women independently echo the title of Coventry Patmore's The Angel in the House (1854) is unimportant. What is important is that both women see the chaste, self-abnegating woman as a threat to the female artist. Sinclair's references to Gertrude Collett as an angel plus the references to the confused and sentimental reasons for her angelic presence in the Brodrick household constitute an indictment of her and women like her. The angel in the house, as Sinclair presents her, is a sentimental abstraction, a corrupt ideal of spirituality, purity, and goodness based upon a denial of the temporal world and of the body through which true spirituality is perceived.

The angel in the house and the artist in the house have little in common. Jane identifies with Tanqueray, a male novelist she knows, rather than with Gertrude. Gertrude also is aware that she and Jane are extremely unlike and, because she is not only an angel but also a fallen angel, she cannot resist subtly reminding Brodrick how well she alleviates difficulties while Jane creates them. Gertrude, when Jane writes, gives Brodrick attention and companionship, cares for his children, and creates an atmosphere of efficiency and comfort around him. Jane, when not exhausted by childbearing or writing, inspires and reciprocates his passion. Since Brodrick apparently needs both kinds of





women, Jane is fortunate that Gertrude is present to fulfill the domestic duties for which Jane has neither the aptitude nor the inclination. Freed of a major source of frustration and a major drain upon her time and energy, she temporarily succeeds in balancing her divided commitments. Nevertheless, Gertrude is an ever-present reproach to Jane, who, seized by guilt and repentance, goes through periods when she tries to be angel as well as artist.

Brodrick makes a second concession when he discovers that, in addition to not having possession of his wife's genius, he at times does not have possession of her body. He does not understand her extreme fatigue at the end of a day of writing, nor does he understand that when she immerses herself in a novel, the characters become more real to her than her husband and family (C 347). When she tries to explain by using Tanqueray's neglect of his wife as another example, Brodrick refuses to acknowledge any parallel. The fact that Jane is a woman is, in his mind, the determining factor. Jane's position is that women, like men, are not all body; women, too, can be exhausted in other ways; the allowances made for male artists should be made for female artists as well. As a result of this discussion, Brodrick allows Jane to conserve her strength by staying in bed every morning for breakfast. His concession, however, does not prevent John Brodrick's wife from becoming ill and demanding Jane's constant presence by her side. When Jane eventually returns to her book, the struggle is greater because she has to propitiate the genius she has denied outlet. She blames the physical relapse she suffers upon completion of the novel on the interruption to her work on it (C 361-2).

Hugh Brodrick makes two additional and much more important adjustments.





If a choice must be made between no more children and no more books for Jane, he says, then there must be no more children (C 400). In addition, he allows his wife to leave home for three months in order to write in peace. The guilt Henry Brodrick makes Jane feel for the weakness and nervous temperament of her second son, the fury with which she reacts to the discovery that his charges are unjust, the death of John Brodrick's wife, the continual demands made upon her by the bereaved husband, her physical collapse following the stillbirth of a third child, as well as the resurgence of her genius upon her recovery, all contribute to her desire to leave. Because she has not the heart to hurt any of the people making demands upon her, she must get away from them; but because she is an artist, she is sensitive to their thoughts and feelings and is all-too-aware of their disapproval. Like Woolf, Sinclair suggests that the genius minds most what is said of him.

Jane's stay away from home proves beneficial to her art but detrimental to her marriage. She perceives the degree to which she needs Tanqueray. The idea for her new book is not dependent upon him, but he gives her confidence in its vitality and rightness as well as in her genius. She sees their relationship as "a fiery intellectual thing" (C 468), but Tanqueray now is convinced that they made serious mistakes when they married other people. Jane, terrified for these other people, flees back to the man who needs her, she is certain, the most. The rumors surrounding her absence and return run their course, but what sorts of concessions to the powerful demands of Jane's genius will be made in her subsequent married life remain in doubt. Jane tries unsuccessfully to convince Nina Lempriere that the handicap of a husband and children is not so severe after all. She insists to Nina that not the



conditions under which a work is produced but the work itself is most important. Nevertheless, the novel makes clear that without major concessions that re-define the traditional relationship between husband and wife, Jane cannot function as both woman and artist. She can do great things, Nina admits, but what might she have done had her circumstances been better, had she not had to struggle continually for physical strength, solitude, and a climate of acceptance and encouragement? (C 378). Genius will find a way, but if vast quantities of energy must be expended in the finding, then the energy remaining may be insufficient for the attainment of full artistic potential. Until allowances are made for the female artist as a matter of course, she must choose with extreme care, if she marries at all, from among the few men likely to sympathize with the demands of her creativity.

In spite of her preoccupation with the problem of love, marriage, and children for the female artist, Sinclair's treatment of such women in some ways parallels George Meredith's more closely than it parallels either Woolf's or Richardson's. When Sinclair subtitles The Creators "a comedy," she does not imply, as some early reviewers and critics think, ironic or satiric treatment.<sup>5</sup> The continual use of the term "genius" with reference to the artists in the book seems in earnest, except in the case of Arnott Nicholson, who thinks he is a genius when obviously he is not. If any laughter is directed at the other artists, surely it is the "thoughtful laughter" arising from the "sound sense" that Meredith associates with comedy. His essay "On the Idea of Comedy and of the Uses of the Comic Spirit" (1897) comes to mind not only because Sinclair defended his work one year before The Creators was published,<sup>6</sup> but also because the equal attention given to the male and





female artists in that novel recalls one of the most important elements in his discussion of comedy. Comedy is nonexistent or primitive, Meredith insists, in societies where women have no freedom. In societies where they have some liberty but are uneducated, melodrama and sentimentality flourish. Comedy exists only in societies "where women are on the road to an equal footing with men, in attainments and in liberty." Most English women, Meredith thinks, are deficient in the comic spirit. They prefer the feminine, sympathetic heroine of romantic and sentimental fiction to the "women of the world" doing "battle with men" whom they encounter in comedy.<sup>7</sup> Like Meredith's female artists in Diana of the Crossways, Emilia in England, and Vittoria, Sinclair's female artists battle in the literary world not so much against men as side-by-side with them. Intellectually and aesthetically their potential equality and even their artistic production is not doubted. Only their opportunity to develop their artistic ability fully in the face of traditional views of woman's role is in question.

Sinclair returns to the problem of marriage for the female artist in Arnold Waterlow (1924). Rosalind Verney is a professional violinist of considerable skill and sensitivity. As in the case of Jane Holland, two men complicate her life. One is Arnold Waterlow, a nonartist with an appreciation of art and an interest in metaphysics. The other is Max Schoonhoven, a talented concert pianist and composer. Like Jane, Linda marries the non-artist. Just as the Brodricks object to Hugh Brodrick's marriage to Jane, so Mrs. Waterlow, certain that Linda has no domestic skills, objects to her son's marriage. The assumption, as usual, is that the female artist must be either woman or artist. Linda proves, however, the difficulty of generalizing about women and women



artists. Jane is inefficient around the house, but Linda is not. Moreover, the money she continues to earn playing her violin prevents them from facing poverty. She even proves to be a good mother, during the brief two years that their baby lives.

Like Jane, Linda marries to a certain extent in defiance of her genius. She defines her situation, however, somewhat differently. When Arnold asks her to marry him, she explains her feelings for another man, Max Schoonhoven. Happy and secure with Arnold in a way that she is not with Max, she predicts, nevertheless, that if Max asks her to go away with him, she will do so. The ecstatic union they achieve when they play together is more important to her than ordinary happiness. Before she marries Arnold, in fact, she does go away with Max on a three-year concert tour. She plucks him out of poverty and obscurity and carries him with her to critical if not financial success. When her father cuts off her allowance, Max, concerned about his career, marries a wealthy American woman. Linda insists, however, that an extremely gifted child like Max, who needs someone to take care of him, cannot be judged like other people. Still, Linda has begun to associate with Max her ability to play the violin. She insists that she could not play before she knew him and that she will not, indeed, cannot play without him. Only when he sends her his latest composition is she tempted to take up her violin again.

Sinclair dramatizes the danger of attributing the female artist's genius to the man she loves in one of her short stories, "The Gift" (1908). Freda Farrar, a poet, decides that Wilton Caldecott is entirely responsible for her ability. Consequently, her loss of him results in the loss of that ability. Her confusion of the two, however, is misguided. What





Freda contributes to her experience of Caldecott, not Caldecott himself, is responsible for her gift. Had she trusted in her inner resources, her imagination, her passion, then the physical presence or absence of Caldecott would not have been decisive. Like Richardson, Sinclair consistently puts the individual first, well ahead of his circumstances.

She is disgusted, therefore, with the commentators on the Brontës who insist upon attributing Charlotte's genius, not to Charlotte herself, but to a man:

But her genius was the thing that irritated, the enigmatic, inexplicable thing. Talent in a woman you can understand, there's even a formula for it--tout talent de femme est un bonheur manqué. So when a woman's talent baffles you, your course is plain: cherchez l'homme. Charlotte's critics agreed that if you could put your finger on the man you would have the key to the mystery. This, of course, was arguing that her genius was, after all, only a superior kind of talent; but some of them had already begun to ask themselves, was it, after all, anything more? So they began to look for the man. They were certain by this time that there was one (3B 82).

The man they found was, of course, M. Hegér, the professor in the girls' school in Brussels where Charlotte taught. Sinclair minimizes his importance and emphasizes Charlotte's genius. Female artists, like male, need only a small suggestion from the external world to start the imagination working.

If the attitude toward the female artist is cherchez l'homme, if the crucial factor in her art is her experience and not her perception, interpretation, or imagination, then the hostility that greets the performing female artists in Sinclair's fiction is explained. Sinclair frequently dramatizes the traditional view that respectable women do not display themselves before an audience either gratis or for money. To perform in public is indecent self-exposure, since the emotional content of a woman's performance inevitably is a direct expression of her





own emotions, not those she may perceive in the music or in the dramatic role she plays. Even the public performance of a woman athlete is criticized in The Combined Maze (1913). One of the reasons Molly Allingham's mother in The Allinghams (1927) does not want her daughter to become a concert pianist is that she does not want her to perform in public. Like Mrs. Allingham, Mrs. Waterlow objects not only to the fact that Rosalind Verney plays "a man's instrument," but also to the public performances she gives. Like Conrad Percy in Jewsbury's The Half-Sisters almost eighty years earlier, Mrs. Waterlow thinks that "a girl who fiddled in public couldn't be quite nice; it was like being an actress, making an exhibition of yourself before people, on a platform, for money. . . .It might have been a form of prostitution the way she went on about it" (AW 232).

Arnold marries Linda with full knowledge of the part Max has played in her life. Yet both of them marry in ignorance. Neither is able to predict the combined effect upon Linda of frustrated motherhood and the return of Max. After her baby dies, she is able to practice scales and exercises, but the beauty of great music hurts her and makes her think of the loss of her child. When Max returns, Linda is certain that he can help her over this obstacle in her playing without the return of their former passionate involvement. She is both right and wrong. Together they give a triumphant concert, but their relationship apparently cannot remain on a musical plane. The Rosalind who loves Arnold is not so strong as the Rosalind who loves Max, and again she leaves to join him. Max both enables her to play the way she wants and to fulfill her desire to mother someone.

Linda's choice in combination with Jane Holland's at the end of The



Creators suggests that the traditionally-defined womanhood inculcated in at least some female artists is fulfilled less by a passionate physical relationship with a man or by the birth of children than by taking care of someone in need. In Jane's case, the man who needs her is not Tanqueray but her husband. Her return to him need not sever the intellectual relationship she has with Tanqueray. In Linda's case, the man who is the artist and who gives depth to her art also is the one who needs her. The combination is unbeatable. Linda's marriage to Arnold, however, is not destroyed. In Arnold, Sinclair comes closest to depicting in the female artist's life the equivalent of the sacrificing woman in the life of the male artist. In a maudlin ending to the novel, Linda returns again, cast off by Max because neuritis in her right arm curtails her professional career. Arnold holds to the promise he made earlier to take her back, although he is involved with another woman. The death of this other woman, however, causes Arnold to need Linda as he had not needed her before. She still can fulfill herself as a woman, therefore, although circumstances prevent her from continuing her artistic career. The rest of her married life, unlike Jane Holland's, presumably will not be a continuation of the struggle to combine marriage with her art.

In a transitional period, when traditional attitudes toward women and the female artist are challenged and re-evaluated, relationships to other people take a variety of forms about which generalization is difficult. Each female artist, on the basis of her ability, commitment, personality, health, and opportunities, makes her own kind of adjustment and pays in her own way for her desire to fulfill herself as both woman and artist. What eventually must be recognized, Sinclair's treatment





of the female artist suggests, is that she is androgynous like the male artist and that her genius is as demanding as his. The allowances made for him must be made for her as well. She must have time and solitude; she must not be required to defend herself continually against charges of neuroticism or neglect. At the same time, she must not be required to cut herself off from close relationships with other people. But she must choose these other people carefully. A male artist might understand better than a conventional man the demands of a woman's genius. George Tanqueray perhaps would have made the necessary allowances for Jane Holland had they married. On the other hand, a male artist might exploit in the cause of his art and career the female artist's tendency to give, as Max Schoonhoven exploits Linda Verney's. If the female artist, Sinclair's novels suggest, cannot find a man who is as concerned about her career as she is about his, then perhaps she will reach her full potential as an artist only if she remains single.

When Sinclair's Rhoda Vivian says, "'We're all in the muddle of the middle,'" she accurately defines women's situation not only as Sinclair but also as Woolf and Richardson see it. Early twentieth-century women interested in the problems of the female artist know what they do not want. Acknowledging that women are designated by nature to bear children, they resent both the ignorance in which they are kept about that function and the social restrictions that bar them from all other activity. They do not agree about the effects of these restrictions, whether, as Woolf says, they severely damage a woman's self-confidence in any abilities she might have outside the domestic sphere or whether, as Richardson and Sinclair suggest, they merely restrict her productivity in these spheres and leave her potential untouched. Women like these three also



know what they want. They want women to be treated as individuals with different interests and commitments, and they want the value women place upon the individual consciousness acknowledged by the larger society.

Until these demands are met, women who take their values into the world beyond the home run numerous risks. The antagonism of conventional people may result in lonely lives or, what may be worse, marriages to unsympathetic men. Attempts to fulfill the requirements of two roles, each defined by society as full-time, may result in failure and in mental or physical breakdowns. The very values women want to express may be lost. Women like herself, Woolf says,

are between the devil and the deep sea. Behind us lies the patriarchal system; the private house, with its nullity, its immorality, its hypocrisy, its servility. Before us lies the public world, the professional system, with its possessiveness, its jealousy, its pugnacity, its greed. The one shuts us up like slaves in a harem; the other forces us to circle, like caterpillars head to tail, round and round the mulberry tree, the sacred tree, of property. It is a choice of evils. Each is bad. Had we not better plunge off the bridge into the river; give up the game; declare that the whole of human life is a mistake and so end it?<sup>8</sup>

Woolf's question recalls the statement by Richardson's Miriam that all women ought to commit suicide rather than acquiesce to life as presently constituted. Yet none of these three women counsels despair. As female artists they, and the female artist-characters they create, confront a hostile social environment. Nevertheless, they confront it with a value system and with the courage to seek not only ways of living but also art forms appropriate to its expression.





III. MASCULINE OR FEMININE REALISM:  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FEMININE AESTHETICS AND METAPHYSICS

A. Presentation, Not Representation:  
May Sinclair and the Avant-Garde

"The Image is the poet's pigment. The painter should use his colour because he sees it or feels it....He should depend... on the creative, not upon the mimetic or representational part in his work. It is the same in writing poems, the author must use his image because he sees it or feels it, not because he thinks he can use it to back up some creed or some system of ethics or economics."

Ezra Pound, Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir (1916)

Just as a consideration of the female artist-characters of Sinclair, Richardson, and Woolf is inseparable from their attitudes toward the suffrage movement so it is inseparable from their awareness of experimental tendencies in the arts. Again their emphases differ, but their works together represent and include discussions of many aesthetic theories characterizing the first decades of the twentieth century. All three think that art, like the situation of women, benefits from a fresh perspective, free of masculine preconceptions. In the larger society that perspective results in the training of women for traditionally masculine jobs and professions in the practice of which they earn money sufficient to give them financial independence and thus the courage to express honestly their own opinions. In the arts that perspective results in the training, time, solitude, and, above all, encouragement that foster confidence sufficient to experiment with forms more appropriate than the traditional ones to the expression of women's values.

Richardson and Woolf present their female artist-characters struggling to break free of tradition and to express their perceptions in their own ways. The struggle of these characters, however, usually





is a lonely one. Sinclair's criticism and fiction recreate the volatile aesthetic period within which they actually function, however independently. Numerous artists in various media struggle to strip away the traditional ideals, the arid intellectual abstractions governing both content and form and try to communicate directly their perceptions of reality. Invariably, only a few, among whom Sinclair obviously sees herself, understand these attempts. She, more frequently and in more detail than either Richardson or Woolf, defends those of her contemporaries who redefine reality and experiment with methods that express it. More frequently, too, Sinclair's artist-characters participate in discussions of their theories with other artists and critics or respond to the attacks and defenses of battalions of reviewers and editors employed by proliferating little magazines.<sup>1</sup> Implicit in much of this talk are theories about art and the artist as well as metaphysical justifications for such theories.

Sinclair's review in 1917 of T. S. Eliot's Prufrock: And Other Observations illustrates her awareness and approval of the major tendencies in the art of her day. Eliot, she says, often is labeled a "'Stark Realist'" because he does not present the familiar kind of beauty that readers have come to expect. Much of what he presents, she admits, is ugly and unpleasant. She defends his right to present such material, however, precisely because he allows neither soothing euphemisms nor elaborate language to obscure the reality he sees. Prufrock is her major example, and her praise of his method anticipates her comments on Richardson a year later. Eliot gives us reality, she says, by giving us direct access to Prufrock's mind. She observes that "instead of writing round and round about Prufrock, explaining that his tragedy is the tragedy of submerged passion, Mr. Eliot simply



removes the covering from Prufrock's mind: Prufrock's mind, jumping quickly from actuality to memory and back again, like an animal, hunted, tormented, terribly and poignantly alive." Eliot's poetry, Sinclair concludes, is meaningful to lovers of poetry who define its primary concern as reality and admit ideas only to the extent that they are "realities and not abstractions."<sup>2</sup>

What Sinclair means by her continual references to reality is clear in the context of her similar observations about the Imagist poets with whom Eliot to a limited extent is associated. The words Sinclair and her artist-characters use to describe such poetry are, in addition to "real," "stripped," "naked," "clean," "clear," "pure," and "hard." Reality is not the external temporal world. It is a fresh perception of that world. In an essay on F. S. Flint in 1921, Sinclair associates the Imagists with Wordsworth and says that the aim of both "is to restore the innocence of memory as Gauguin restored the 'innocence of the eye.'" To this end the Imagist abandons traditional rhetorical language and intellectual abstractions and responds directly to what he experiences.<sup>3</sup> Sinclair defines poetry, in fact, as "the rhythmic expression of an intense personal emotion produced by direct contact with reality" and associates these qualities with prose as well.<sup>4</sup> She finds it easier, however, to define Imagist poetry by describing what it is not, an approach she uses again when she tries to describe Richardson's method. Imagism, Sinclair insists,

is not Symbolism. It has nothing to do with image-making. It abhors Imagery. Imagery is one of the old worn-out decorations the Imagists have scrapped.

The Image is not a substitute; it does not stand for anything but itself. Presentation not Representation is the watchword of the school. The Image, I take it, is Form. But it is not pure form. It is form and substance.





It may be either the form of a thing...or the Image may be the form of a passion, an emotion or a mood....The point is that the passion, the emotion or the mood is never given as an abstraction. And in no case is the Image a symbol of reality (the object); it is reality (the object) itself. You cannot distinguish between the thing and its image....

What the Imagists are "out for" is direct naked contact with reality....There must be nothing between you and your object.<sup>5</sup>

Sinclair compares the Victorian poets to Protestants who believe that the bread and wine symbolize the body and blood of Christ and contrasts them to the Imagists whom she compares to the Catholics. The Catholics believe that the bread and wine actually are the body and the blood, not substitutes for it.

This identity of form and substance often results in charges of obscurity from uncomprehending critics and reviewers. Sinclair tries various methods of combatting such charges, not by denying them altogether but by explaining and justifying, by distinguishing between different types of obscurity. In her essay on H. D., for example, she distinguishes between the obscure thought that is the product of intellectual superficiality and the obscure feeling that is so because "emotion at a certain depth is obscure."<sup>6</sup> In the case of Eliot she distinguishes among various kinds of obscurity that "may come from defective syntax, from a bad style, from confusion of ideas, from involved thinking, from irrelevant association, from sheer piling on of ornament." Eliot's obscurity, however, is the result of none of these. Nor is it H. D.'s obscurity of feeling. Eliot's obscurity results either from references to unfamiliar objects or from very rapid and erratic movements among familiar objects. In the latter case, his poetry presents, not the mind perceived according to the rules of logic or literary tradition, but the lively way in which his particular mind



actually works.<sup>7</sup>

References to the intentions of various kinds of free verse poets, reflecting her acquaintance with the work of Eliot and the Imagists, as well as references to the critical controversy raging around them recur in Sinclair's fiction. In her novels and short stories, even more than in her essays, the intellectual and aesthetic ferment of the early decades of the century is apparent. The involvement of the visual as well as the verbal arts, the influence of aesthetic developments on the continent, and the threat to art of the First World War all form part of the picture. Most representative in this respect is The Tree of Heaven (1917).

Michael Harrison, the young poet in this novel, is a member of a group of writers and artists whose theories might be associated with those of the Vorticists.<sup>8</sup> "The Vortex," in fact, is the title of the second section, which deals both with Michael's involvement in revolutionary art and with his sister's involvement in revolutionary women's politics. The vortex image, which dominates the novel, is associated with young people and the young century, with various whirling, violently energetic masses of people in revolt who draw others into the confused centers of their respective whirlwinds. Some young people have no strength to resist being sucked into the swirling motion. Some, thoroughly convinced that they are in control of their lives and actions, do not realize that they whirl within a particular revolt. Other young people recognize the vortex and, while attracted, resist. Insisting upon their individuality, they refuse to get caught up in the emotions of the herd. Michael Harrison, for example, resists submerging his individuality in various groups, including the one made up of avant-garde artists, just as his sister refuses to give





herself up to the feminist vortex. Among the members of the older generation, some recognize and submerge themselves in the various whirlwinds set up by revolting, energetic youth in order to rejuvenate themselves. Others recognize and abhor the vortices that threaten both the traditions with which they have lived and the values of their children.

Sinclair reproduces, in part, one of the many discussions about the arts occurring among the members of Michael Harrison's group. The discussion is a pastiche of theories advanced by the Dadaists, Cubists, and Futurists, all of whom were known, although not necessarily admired, by the English Vorticists. Members of the group disagree on numerous points, such as whether or not past works of art literally ought to be destroyed, but they seem united in their abhorrence of artists who imitate other artists, past or contemporary, in their desire to produce works of art that cannot be imitated, and in their desire to present directly not the temporal world but the reality they perceive through it. What most of them perceive is energy, movement, rhythm. Various attempts by the visual artists in the group to define their intentions bring one of them to the level of metaphysics:

"We're out against the damnable affectations of naturalism and humanism. If I draw a perfect likeness of a fat, pink woman I've got a fat, pink woman and nothing else but a fat pink woman. And a fat, pink woman is a work of Nature, not a work of art. And I'm lying. I'm presenting as a reality what is only an appearance. The better the likeness the bigger the lie. But movement and rhythm are realities, not appearances. When I present rhythm and movement I've done something. I've made reality appear."  
(TH 244-5).<sup>9</sup>

This artist goes on to apply his theories to the verbal as well as to the visual arts. He suggests that if the writer breaks up traditional syntactical patterns just as the painter or sculptor decomposes





figures or groups of figures, then he not only will create new, freer prose forms, but he also will free himself of the sterile abstract ideas which those syntactical patterns perpetuate. While he no longer talks in terms of his fat, pink woman, his remarks can be applied to the characterization of women in literature. All three of the women writers who are the focus of this study consider most of those characterizations lies. Their aim and the aim of the group of artists in The Tree of Heaven is the one Sinclair attributes to the Imagist poets, "'innocence of memory'" and "'innocence of the eye'" (TH 245).

Michael Harrison also comes into contact with avant-garde poetry in France. Contact with France is not responsible for his experiments in what he calls "'live verse,'" but it does convince him of their value. Jules Réveillaud, an older French poet Michael meets in Paris, finds something good in all of his poems but approves of the entire poem whenever he comes upon one of the experiments. Réveillaud tells Michael, "Nous avons trempé la poésie dans la peinture et la musique. Il faut la délivrer par la sculpture. Chaque ligne, chaque vers, chaque poème taillé en block, sans couleur, sans decor, sans rime.'...'La sainte pauvre du style dépouillé.'...'Il faut de la dureté, toujours de la dureté'" (TH 185). He thinks it amazing that Michael has never read any of his poems and adds, "'C'est que la réalité est plus forte que nous'" (TH 185). Michael thinks it ironic that, without knowing it, he has been successful in his lonely struggle to get at reality; he is horrified to think that he might never have recognized his success had he not found in Paris a group of poets who, dissatisfied like himself with conventional poetry, tried similar and even more daring experiments.



Michael Harrison's struggle to get into his poetry "the clear hard Reality" he perceives occurs in a war-torn world seemingly determined to destroy beauty. The War is the most powerful vortex that sweeps the early twentieth-century European continent. Ultimately it results in the deaths of Jules Réveillaud as well as Michael Harrison. For a long time, however, Michael rejects the furious English patriotism that strikes him as another manifestation of the tyrannical collective emotion he abhors. He considers the artist who enlists more cowardly than the one who continues to pursue his art. Michael and some of the other young artists he knows agree that

any fool could fight; but if you were an artist, your honour bound you to ignore the material context, to refuse, even to your country, the surrender of the highest that you knew. They believed with the utmost fervour and sincerity that they defied Germany more effectually, because more spiritually, by going on and producing fine things with imperturbability than if they went out against the German Armies with bayonets and machine-guns. Moreover they were restoring Beauty as fast as Germany destroyed it (TH 330).

In the tradition of William Blake, Michael greets the world's warriors not with weapons but with works of art. Defiantly he publishes his poems. His family, however, ignores them and urges him to enlist instead. Doing so after his brother's death at the front, he sees his action both as a repudiation of everything beautiful and worthwhile and as an unrewarding immersion of his individuality in everything revolting and obscene. At the front, however, he does find the odd moment in which to write poems. They are attempts to communicate his discovery that reality can be tapped not only by the perception of beauty but also by the confrontation of extreme danger and death. Consequently, he rejects the view that writers should reveal the horrors of war. He does not think that such writing deters further





wars.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, while he admits the truth of such representations, he insists that they are not the whole truth. The soldiers' moments of ecstasy, he insists, are the "spiritual compensation for the physical torture, and there would be a sort of infamy in trying to take it from us" (TH 397).<sup>11</sup>

The Tree of Heaven is Sinclair's most complete fictional exploration of the volatile intellectual, aesthetic, and political milieu of the early twentieth century; nevertheless, other artist-figures in her fiction are very much a part of the thrust and parry of a period of rapid change in which artistic innovations are attacked and defended with equal conviction. In "The Return" (1921), for example, a free verse poet whose aims are very like those of the Imagists, is defended as well as attacked by reviewers, but is dismissed totally by his family as incompetent and obscure.<sup>12</sup> Stephen Allingham in The Allinghams (1927) is another experimenter whose poetry is treated in a similar manner. When his "Epithalamion" appears in 1909, hostile reviews appear in a half dozen leading periodicals. One reviewer disparages him as inept, irritating, and eccentric and refuses to call poems, barbaric works that defy all poetic traditions. Another respected critic, however, insists that the experimental poems ought to be treated with respect. In them, Stephen Allingham has substituted subtle for marked rhythms and simplicity for ornamentation.<sup>13</sup> In all of these cases, aesthetic innovation is associated closely with metaphysics. A rejection of traditional linguistic and literary structures and themes, and the fresh, direct presentation of reality in such a way that manner cannot be separated from matter is paralleled in metaphysics by the stripping away of the



abstract ideas about reality associated with traditional idealism, and the immediate, fresh apprehension of ultimate reality through the temporal world ultimately defined by Sinclair as the "new idealism."

For the same reasons that she defends Eliot and the Imagists and manifests considerable interest in the Vorticists' theories, Sinclair defends Richardson's work. Like Sinclair, Woolf wrote about Richardson and about the novel in general. Both women share many of Richardson's views. Woolf's female artist-characters, moreover, undergo a trial and error process similar to Miriam's during which they try to communicate their perceptions in appropriate forms. Any look at the aesthetic theories and female artist-characters of Sinclair, Richardson, and Woolf within the experimental milieu that Sinclair recreates in her essays and fiction, therefore, begins naturally with Richardson. Her major concern, as reflected in that of her character, Miriam Henderson, is the discovery of an appropriate form for the expression of women's values. Her works, combined with those of Sinclair and Woolf, constitute a reasonably clear statement of a feminine aesthetics and of the metaphysics behind it.





B. "Life in Its Own Right at First Hand":  
Dorothy Richardson, Miriam Henderson, and the Novel

"Human life may be painted according to two methods. There is the stage method. According to that each character is duly marshalled at first, and ticketed; we know with immutable certainty that at the right crises each one will reappear and act his part, and, when the curtain falls, all will stand before it bowing. There is a sense of satisfaction in this, and of completeness. But there is another method -- the method of the life we all lead. Here nothing can be prophesied. There is a strange coming and going of feet. Men appear, act and re-act upon each other, and pass away. When the crisis comes the man who would fit it does not return. When the curtain falls no one is ready. When the footlights are brightest they are blown out; and what the name of the play is no one knows. If there sits a spectator who knows, he sits so high that the players in the gaslight cannot hear his breathing. Life may be painted according to either method; but the methods are different. The canons of criticism that bear upon the one cut cruelly upon the other."

Olive Schreiner, Preface to The Story of an African Farm (1883)

Dorothy Richardson's brief indications of intent, the method she uses in Pilgrimage, and Miriam Henderson's comments throughout that work form the basis for a contrast between masculine and feminine realism in the novel. In essence, masculine realism reflects a partial, analytical, and often negative, critical, cynical, or pessimistic world view. Assuming that life is primarily in the state of becoming, it emphasizes change, process. In this context external facts, sequences of events, continual making and doing are most valued. No relationship of importance exists between man and anything called "God." The individual is relatively unimportant; he is valuable only in relation to other people, as a part of one or more groups. His relation to other people, moreover, is primarily physical or verbal. The artist is a person who, with superior skill, communicates to other people his





extensive knowledge of this world of facts and groups. His attitude toward his readers and often toward his characters is condescending and coercive. Self-consciously proud of his talent and avidly seeking admiration, he produces clever phrases and aesthetic structures that call attention to themselves and to his ability.

Feminine realism, on the other hand, reflects an all-encompassing, synthetic, fundamentally affirmative or optimistic world-view. It intuitively feels that life is primarily changeless and stable, in the state of being. In this context a person's inner sense of living fully, joyfully in the all-inclusive present moment is most valuable. Life so experienced has a dimension that might be called spiritual. Such insight, which is the primary reality, is achieved, not in conversation or in physical contact with other people, but in silent and usually solitary contemplation enhanced, at times, by one's surroundings or by a similar awareness in someone else.<sup>1</sup> Each individual's awareness or lack of awareness of this dimension is far more significant than any group to which he belongs. This awareness is of primary importance to the feminine realist. Finding a way to foster it in and to share it with others by means of her art is her task. Such communication is not achieved by didacticism in the masculine sense of superior imparting knowledge to inferior. It is achieved by equals collaborating in the discovery of a reality to which everyone has access if not always the same amount of awareness. Like George Sand, Richardson does not accept the notion that the female artist inevitably is vain. The feminine realist does not call attention to her skill and by so doing provides a barrier between the reader and the reality she perceives. Instead she makes her awareness fully accessible.



Richardson insists that every work of art is "the writer's self portrait," and that "every novel, taken as a whole, shares with every other species of portrayal the necessity of being a signed self-portrait and might well be subtitled Portrait of the Artist at the Age of --." <sup>2</sup> Similarly, one of Miriam's most important discoveries in Pilgrimage is the real author in his work:

Then you read books to find the author!...I have just discovered that I don't read books for the story, but as a psychological study of the author....It was rather awful and strange....It meant...things coming to you out of books, people, not the people in the books, but knowing, absolutely, everything about the author...and the world was full of books....They were people. More real than actual people. They came nearer. In life everything was so scrappy and mixed up. In a book the author was there in every word (I Hc 384). <sup>3</sup>

Miriam reads books to learn not superficial facts about the author's external appearance and behavior but the extent to which he is aware of the stable inner life. Her certainty about this reality is increased by her conclusion that even the authors who seem most unaware would not be so determined to express themselves in words if they took seriously their own facile proclamations about life. Merely attending to what the author says in a book, she decides, is dangerous. Writers may define situations as sad or glad, or they may make unwarranted moral judgments, but such statements do not matter. No matter what is said, each work of art is "a dance..., a song, a prayer, an important sermon, a message" from the real person who produced it (I Hc 385). The message is that the individual's awareness of the very fact of life is most valuable. Masculine realism may obstruct or deny it with the grim pictures it so skillfully paints. Nevertheless, even masculine realism supports the intuition that life itself is astonishing and worthwhile: without some such fundamental conviction, Miriam suggests,





the attempt to express anything at all would not be worth the trouble.

Richardson, through the statements in her essays and through the discoveries of her character in Pilgrimage, links that character with herself.<sup>4</sup> The real author in Pilgrimage is not represented so much by what Miriam does or by what she says to other people. The real author is represented in the way Miriam is presented. Richardson gives us access to the inner life that Miriam tries increasingly to express and to find in others; the conclusions she formulates about its importance reflect Richardson's. The reality of which Miriam becomes increasingly convinced in the novel is the reality of which Richardson became convinced before she began writing its first section. Pilgrimage simultaneously presents a developing awareness of immutability and represents the aesthetic fruit of that awareness. Whatever vacillations Miriam undergoes at any point in the novel, Richardson consistently reveals her conviction of what constitutes reality in every element of her art.

#### "Becoming Versus Being"

"...the man who tries to express his age, instead of expressing himself, is doomed to destruction."

Ezra Pound, Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir (1916)

The female artist, as Richardson sees her, operates among artistic traditions instituted and perpetuated largely by men. In 1925, in an essay entitled "Women in the Arts," she points out that "the woman, and particularly the woman painter, going into the world of art is immediately surrounded by masculine traditions. Traditions based on assumptions that are largely unconscious and whose power of suggestion is unlimited."<sup>5</sup> When Richardson herself began to write, she found



no tradition within which she felt comfortable. She thought that the novels written by men and by women imitating men presented an incomplete and misleading view of life. They dramatized life

Horizontally. Assembling their characters, the novelists developed situations, devised events, climax and conclusion. I could not accept their finalities. Always, for charm or repulsion, for good or ill, one was aware of the author and applauding, or deploring his manipulations....what one was assured were the essentials seemed to me secondary to something I could not then divine, and the curtain-dropping finalities entirely false to experience.<sup>6</sup>

In her Foreword to the 1938 edition of Pilgrimage, Richardson defines her own work as an attempt "to produce a feminine equivalent of the current masculine realism" (I 9).<sup>7</sup> She implies that what men define as real and the methods they use to reflect their definition in the novel are different from what women define as real and the methods they ought to use to reflect their definition. Novels do not express adequately the inner life that as a woman Richardson finds more real than the outer.<sup>8</sup> Central to that inner life and to what Richardson tries to express is a sense of "'life in its own right at first hand.'"<sup>9</sup>

Richardson admits that she is not alone in her production of feminine realism. In 1930 she notes that George Moore, Henry James, and others "have refused to interpose between the reader and the text, either by acting as conductor of the tour -- by giving extraneous information with regard to characters -- or by representing current systems of idéas -- by commenting, both directly and, by means of the use of qualitative adjectives, indirectly." Her method is her own, she says, to the extent that it occurred to her suddenly and independently.<sup>10</sup> In 1938, in her Foreword to Pilgrimage, she alludes to two additional figures who must be Virginia Woolf and James Joyce.<sup>11</sup> Amazed to find her "lonely track...a populous highway," Richardson





mentions two fellow-travelers, "one a woman mounted upon a magnificently caparisoned charger, the other a man walking, with eyes devoutly closed, weaving as he went a rich garment of new words wherewith to clothe the antique dark material of his engrossment" (I 10). She also mentions Proust. And, while she again acknowledges Henry James as a possible "pathfinder," she finds an additional predecessor in Goethe who, in Wilhelm Meister, distinguishes between the novel, which develops slowly according to the reflections upon events of a relatively passive central character, and drama, in which the central character is active and influences events (I 11).

Of the writers whom Richardson associates with feminine realism, whether as predecessors or practitioners, only one, Virginia Woolf, is a woman. Feminine realism, as Richardson ultimately sees it, is not dependent necessarily upon biological sex. "Masculine" and "feminine" refer to different although not equally valid definitions of reality and correspondingly different ways to communicate those definitions in the novel. Men, however, are more likely to espouse masculine values and women, feminine values, as Miriam discovers in Pilgrimage. Indeed, she at times hyperbolically lauds woman's wisdom and condemns man to irreparable blindness. Miriam's extreme proclamations, however, ultimately must be seen in the context of the whole work in which she insists repeatedly that an awareness of the inner life is potential in everyone (e.g. III D1 217-18; III RL 392; III Trap 429), and in which she meets men who have this awareness but refuse to acknowledge it, like Michael Shatov (III RL 305-6) and Hypo Wilson (IV DLH 226) as well as men who have it and are ready to relate to people on those terms, like Lintoff (III RL 298).





Richardson insists, however, that the inner life is the primary reality, encompassing any significance attributed to the external world. Her conviction on this point is at the root of the differences existing between her art and treatment of the female artist and that of Virginia Woolf. Discursive statements about Richardson's feminine realism and about the world view of which it is a product necessitate a sensitive and continual balancing of individual statement and larger context. The critic who is immersed in her work must try both to clarify confusions and contradictory statements by treating the text qualitatively rather than quantitatively and to enfold such confusions and contradictions, as Richardson does herself, within a perspective that eliminates them. Miriam says, for example, that "both ways of approach, the inner and the outer, should exist together in the ideal human being" (IV DLH 182). Similarly, Richardson criticizes men for deifying "one half of 'the psychological whole.'"<sup>12</sup> Miriam, however, and Richardson as well, frequently are attracted to slight and even radical deviations from their fundamental position. Moreover, neither statement indicates whether or not they consider one half more valuable than the other.

That they do is suggested by other proportions in Pilgrimage and in Richardson's essays. "Very gifted" men, Miriam thinks in Revolving Lights, "are really, as people say of the poets, more than three parts women" (III RL 268). Richardson, in an essay written in 1917, notes, too, that "artists and mystics are three-parts woman," and that they have the woman's ability to synthesize, to hold all opinions at once.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, in Dawn's Left Hand, Miriam thinks that in order to communicate with man in "his shaped world, rationalized according to whatever scheme



of thought was appealing to him at the moment," women must deny "three-fourths of their being" (IV DLH 223). In the total context of Richardson's work, inner and outer are not valued equally; the psychological whole is not made up of two equal halves, as seems to be the case with Woolf and her most perceptive artist-characters. Male values have dominated history and art; male values and men themselves are valued while female values and women are devalued. Richardson's feminine realism both reflects and contributes to a shift in values, not in the direction of balance, but in the direction of reversal. Richardson, and her female artist-character, Miriam, suggest that feminine values are the central and primary reality and that masculine values are peripheral and secondary. Both ought to exist in every human being, but masculine values constitute only about one-fourth of the whole. In a male-dominated society, only one-fourth of human potential is utilized by most men and by the women who admire them. These proportions reflect Richardson's final decision about the relationship between the states of becoming and being.<sup>14</sup> The conclusion is expressed in Miriam's thoughts in Clear Horizon:

Being versus becoming. Becoming versus being. Look after the being and the becoming will look after itself. Look after the becoming and the being will look after itself? Not so certain. Therefore it is certain that becoming depends upon being. Man carries his bourne within himself and is there already, or he would not even know that he exists (IV CH 362).

When the state of being is recognized as primary, it encompasses the state of becoming and eliminates any serious opposition between the two.

Richardson's dissatisfactions with the novel when she began to write are reflected in those of her character who articulates them





in reaction to the views of a male artist-character, Hypo Wilson. Wilson is based on H. G. Wells, one of the novelists Woolf also denounces as a materialist.<sup>15</sup> His attitude toward the novel is the product of a world view that Miriam rejects. She is distressed by his beliefs that God merely is man's invention, that man evolved from the ape until he discovered science, and that science will order chaos. Women, Wilson thinks, reproduce the men who implement science, and writers describe reality as the scientist sees it (II Tun 122).

Hypo Wilson's values, the values of masculine realism, are revealed in Pilgrimage both in his manner of conversation and in the advice he gives Miriam. Listening to him talk, she first is impressed by his charm and his authoritative manner. Yet she resents his condescending tone and is convinced that somehow what he says is wrong (II Tun 119). Hypo, moreover, is not fond of the interrogative, directed either at himself or at others. "Unquestioned dogmas [rule] his intelligence," Miriam decides (IV CH 327). He tells rather than asks and subordinates rather than involves his listeners. Miriam notices immediately that he asks "questions by saying them -- statements" (II Tun 110-11). He has a penchant, moreover, for epithets which classify and label, like "'Sudden Miriam,'" (III RL 340) or "'Catholic Miriam'" (III RL 341). Miriam parodies him in her thoughts: "Kind Hypo. Doing his best for her" (III RL 340). Appropriate to his authoritative manner and his love of neat categories and labels is his characteristic gesture, the "minatory outstretched forefinger" (II Tun 113, 118).

Miriam disapproves of books designed to prove points (II Tun 427); nevertheless, an attempt to prove the existence of a reality too long



ignored or denied in a male-dominated culture is the primary motivation behind feminine realism. Apparently a difference exists between trying to prove a partial truth by masculine methods for the glory of the man offering the proof, and championing a position that involves a realization of the all-encompassing truth to which all have potential access. To be didactic in the latter cause presumably is justified.

Miriam arrives at this conclusion partly as a result of her relationship with Hypo Wilson. To converse with him, she discovers, she must be false to her feminine values. She has "to be brilliant and amusing to hold his attention -- in fact to tell lies. To get on here, one would have to say clever things in a high bright voice" (II Tun 113). To a certain extent Miriam conforms to expectations; then she reproaches herself for giving in, partly because she senses in him a recognition of something more in life than his scientific world view allows. She also senses that he fears and denies that something (II Tun 124). Constantly Miriam tries to tap the part of his personality that he will neither acknowledge nor utilize (IV DH 280), to win his admission of a reality different from and more fundamental than that of science:

To shreds she would tear [Hypo's] two fold vision of women as bright intelligent response or complacently smiling audience. Force him to see the evil in women who made terms with men, the poison there was in the trivial gaiety of those who accepted male definitions of life and the world. Somehow make him aware of the reality that fell, all the time, in the surrounding silence, outside his shapes and classifications (III RL 360).

More and more she objects to the women who encourage Hypo's tendencies to view people as groups and to regard women as appendages of men rather than as "a different order of consciousness." Just as he represents a threat to the feminine consciousness, so it represents a potential





threat to his disregard of "life in its own right at first hand" and to his regard for progress toward an imagined future (IV DLH 264). Miriam is willing to lose his friendship in order to see "his world of ceaseless 'becoming' exchanged for one wherein should be included also the fact of 'being,' the overwhelming, smiling hint, proof against all possible tests, provided by the mere existence of anything, anywhere" (IV CH 361-2).

Miriam, who tries and finds wanting Hypo Wilson's definition of reality, also rejects the advice he gives her about writing because it obviously is the product of that definition. Her conflicts with him cause her to formulate her major objections to the novel as it has been and is being written. Hypo tells her, for example, that "'Life, especially speeded up, modern life, if we're to get anything done, doesn't, dear Miriam, admit of intensive explorations of the depths of personalities" (IV CH 334). Such a view results in the classification of people according to superficial, external characteristics by an author convinced of his superior knowledge and skills. Often such a view results in the "'cynic-satirical'" stance that Michael Shatov, another of Miriam's "anti-mentors," admires in Turgenev and that Miriam sometimes admires but basically mistrusts in Shatov himself (III D1 45, 197). Miriam tries the masculine method of describing people and decides in Revolving Lights that it is unsatisfactory. When she amuses Hypo by telling in his manner, anecdotes drawn from her own experience, she has "a haunting sense of misrepresentation, and even of treachery to him, in contributing to his puzzling, almost unvarying vision of people as pitifully absurd" (III RL 254). His manner ignores what is most real to the people he describes and imposes lifeless finalities where none exist (III RL 255).





Because she finds something wrong with Hypo's way of describing the people he meets, she hesitates when on various occasions he advises her to do likewise. He suggests that she take advantage of her ability to observe closely and write up her experiences (II Tun 129), that she "'write the first dental novel'" (IV CH 396) or "'document [her] period'" (IV CH 397). If she did document her period, she would emphasize not external events and facts but the inner responses they elicit in the consciousness of an individual, to the extent that they elicit any responses at all. Miriam also is suspicious of various "cunning little trick[s]" that Hypo recommends, such as keeping, like Woolf's Bernard in The Waves, pad and pen always handy in order to jot down "felicitous phrases" that occur in meditative moments or are struck off in conversation. She is suspicious of the neatness of such phrases, doubts their ability to communicate reality, and perceives their tendency, in fact, to shift attention from reality to the phrase-maker himself (IV DH 418-19). Consequently, in reply to one of Hypo's urgings to write up her experiences, she bursts out,

'Oh, I hate all these written-up things: "Jones always wore a battered cricket cap, a little askew." They simply drive me mad. You know the whole thing is going to be lies from the beginning to end.'

'You're a romantic, Miriam.'

'I'm not. It's the "always wore." Trying to get at you, just as much as "Iseult the Fair." Just as unreal, just as much in an assumed voice. The amazing thing is the way men go prosing on for ever and ever, admiring each other, never suspecting' (III RL 377).

Miriam objects, in other words, both to the factual matter and to the generalizing and superficially clever manner that Hypo Wilson advises her to adopt.

Were Miriam to take his advice she probably would write like Edna Prout, one of the novelists who visits the Wilsons. Miriam's



impressions of the woman's social and literary posing are punctuated by the word, "clever," a word that, in the context of Pilgrimage, is not complimentary. Miss Prout writes clever novels, dresses cleverly, and converses in the clever manner approved by Wilson (III RL 339). That he also approves of her work is not surprising. Miriam is amazed to find that he is reading the proofs of Miss Prout's latest novel, but she is aghast when she realizes that Miss Prout has included in the book people they both know. She hardly can believe that

that was 'writing'; from behind the scenes. People and things from life, a little altered, and described from the author's point of view. Easy; if your life was amongst a great many people and things and you were hard enough to be sceptical and superior. But an impossibly mean advantage...a cheap easy way. Cold clever way of making people look seen-through and foolish; to be laughed at, while the authors remained admired, special people, independent, leading easy airy sunlit lives, supposed, by readers who did not know where they got their material, to be creators (III RL 342).

Miriam is offended not by the use of the author's experience but by the attitude toward that experience. People are violated, life itself is violated by the reduction of everyone and everything, except the superior author, to absurdity. Miriam, who reads Miss Prout's manuscript after Hypo Wilson, concludes that both author and characters are ruthless and exploitative and that both engage in a lot of futile fuss that betrays a false definition of reality (III RL 348-9). At one point Miriam thinks she intuitively has a deeper awareness in Miss Prout (III RL 359), but most of the time she sees her as a woman who has abdicated, who imitates masculine ways of thinking and expressing herself. Miriam chooses another course.

Wilson initially advises Miriam to write short, descriptive fillers or "middles" for periodicals, then criticism, then, as the ultimate attainment, a novel (IV DLH 239). Miriam is unimpressed with his





hierarchy. She does not see the novel, particularly the novel as she knows it, as a writer's highest goal. Already in Interim she concludes that "novelists were angry men lost in a fog." Their novels merely are one among many of their "different set pieces of work in the world, each in a space full of problems none of them could agree about" (II Int 443). Obviously if Miriam is to undertake a novel, the genre must be redefined. The novels by women she has read do not provide any basis for redefinition. While teaching at the Pernes' school in Backwater, Miriam avidly reads popular novels by Rosa Nouchette Carey and Mrs. Hungerford. They serve the purpose of romantic escapism from the grim North London environment, but they do not ring true. The happy domestic world and the romantic wealthy world she encounters in these novels do not seem to include her (I Bw 284). In spite of the fact that most of the men she knows belong to the Carey world and look for women who belong to it too, Miriam concludes that she prefers the "strong bad things" in Ouida's novels that run counter to traditional public opinion (I Bw 286). Even so, she decides that she dislikes novels. "'I can't see what they are about,'" she tells Michael Shatov. "'They seem to be an endless fuss about nothing'" (III D1 45).

Hypo's suggestion that Miriam look to the novel as a goal brings her to the fullest expression of her dissatisfaction with that genre as represented by prominent male novelists. Her reactions to Hypo's remarks are worth quoting in full since they introduce most of the considerations which must be included in a discussion of feminine realism.

And Hypo's emphasis suggested that the hideous, irritating, meaningless word novvle represented the end and aim of a writer's existence. Yet about them all, even those who left her stupefied with admiring joy, was a dreadful



enclosure.

She saw Raskolnikov on the stone staircase of the tenement house being more than he knew himself to be and somehow redeemed before the awful deed one shared without wanting to prevent, in contrast to all the people in James who knew so much and yet did not know.

'Even as you read about Waymarsh and his "sombre glow" and his "attitude of prolonged impermanence" as he sits on the edge of the bed talking to Strether, and revel in all the ways James uses to reveal the process of civilizing Chad, you are distracted from your utter joy by fury over all he is unaware of. And even Conrad. The self-satisfied, complacent, know-all condescendingness of their handling of their material. Wells seems to have more awareness. But all his books are witty exploitations of ideas. The torment of all novels is what is left out. The moment you are aware of it, there is torment in them. Bang, bang, bang, on they go, these men's books, like an L.C.C. tram, yet unable to make you forget them, the authors, for a moment. It worries me to think of novels. And yet I'm thrilled to the marrow when I hear of a new novelist. Clayhanger, though I've not read it.'

'He's a realist. Documenting. You'd like Bennett. Perhaps the novel's not your form. Women ought to be good novelists. But they write best about their own experiences. Love-affairs and so forth. They lack creative imagination.'

'Ah, imagination. Lies.'

'Try a novel of ideas. Philosophical. There's George Eliot.'

'Writes like a man.'

'Just so. Lewes. Be a feminine George Eliot. Try your hand.'

He was setting out the contents of the cruet as if they were pieces in a game -- a lifetime might be well spent in annotating the male novelists, filling out the vast oblivions in them, especially in the painfully comic or the painfully tragic and in the satirists...(IV DLH 239-40).

Miriam's reaction to Hypo's view of the novel and his very traditional view of the female writer indicates a basic dissatisfaction with point of view. A wrong relationship exists between the author and his material and between the author and his reader, a relationship that somehow obliterates instead of expresses reality. This wrong relationship on the one hand reveals a severely limited world view and, on the other, results in stylistic affectations, superficial characterization, overemphasis on plot, and a distorted treatment of setting.





Miriam's development of an alternate aesthetics occurs on three levels that are present concurrently in the novel. These three levels to a certain extent overlap, and discussing them separately necessitates a certain amount of repetition. Nevertheless, doing so is advantageous in that the components as well as the results of Miriam's development toward a feminine aesthetics become clear. On one level, Miriam wrestles intellectually with a number of accepted concepts like "art," "imagination," "talent," and "genius." Her reflections on art lead to distinctions between man's art and woman's art as well as between woman's art and woman's artifice. Feminine realism, she concludes, utilizes elements of both man's and woman's art but is identifiable with neither. To determine the relationship between these elements, Miriam has to consider the meanings of several terms associated with the creative process. At the same time that she challenges various concepts associated with the arts, on another level she closely observes, experiments with, and draws conclusions about various ways people communicate with each other and about the value systems these ways reflect. Her conclusions have significant implications for her handling of the elements of the novel as well as for the way she herself is presented in Pilgrimage. Finally, by a trial and error method, Miriam attempts to express her awareness of the stable inner life. Her negative tendency to reject traditional ways both of thinking about art and of communicating, as well as the definitions of reality such thoughts and behavior reflect, is combined with positive efforts to define and to practise alternatives more suitable to the expression of what to her is reality.





Man's Art, Woman's Art, and Woman's Artifice

"...there was a quality beyond art, beyond genius, beyond any special cleverness; and that was, the great social quality of taking, as by nature, without assumption a queenly position in a circle, and making harmony of all the instruments to be found in it."

George Meredith, Sandra Belloni (1864).

"Knowledge has two forms: it is either intuitive knowledge or logical knowledge; knowledge obtained through the imagination or knowledge obtained through the intellect; knowledge of the individual or knowledge of the universal; of individual things or of the relations between them: it is, in fact, productive either of images or of concepts...."

Benedetto Croce, Aesthetic (1909)

An understanding of Richardson's feminine realism depends upon the distinction Miriam makes between man's art and woman's art. Crucial to an understanding of that distinction, obviously, is the attitude of both Miriam and her creator to art. According to both of them, the art that women have been criticized for not having produced is the product of a limited male value-system, one that not only denigrates the inner life but also reduces women to a series of reproductive processes. Just as the reduction of women in this way is unacceptable so is the elevation of men because they are the producers of science and art. Re-evaluation of the functions of both sexes is in order.

Richardson, through Miriam as well as in essays, attacks the elevation of the artist to the position of hero. Already in The Tunnel Miriam challenges the adulation accorded the artist when she criticizes her friend Mag's "wistful hero worship...raving about certain writers and actors as if she did not know they were people" (II Tun 81). Miriam, although she at times shows similar tendencies, as in her thoughts on Henry Irving (II Tun 186) and on W. B. Yeats (III Trap 437-8), usually draws back and notes their very human limitations.<sup>16</sup> Similarly,



Richardson sees the artist as different from other people only in degree, not in kind. In her book on Quakerism, she says that artists are as different from most people as mystics are different from artists. Everyone, Richardson says, experiences moments of illumination when his attention is arrested by something to the exclusion of all else, when his "larger and deeper being...flow[s] up and flood[s] the whole field of surface intelligence." The experiences of beauty, love, and conversion are typical albeit infrequent, unpredictable, and not fully explainable. The artist experiences such moments more frequently than do other people. He exists "in perpetual communication with his larger self." Unlike the mystic, who loses contact with the world of the senses and reports nothing, the artist remains sensitive to the external world and shares his experiences with its other inhabitants.<sup>17</sup> Most people who call themselves artists, however, do not concern themselves with the inner life and the larger self. Instead they are content to express externals with the superficial cleverness that calls attention to themselves as superior individuals possessing unique skills. If this kind of artist and art are valued in society, then women need not feel inferior for not having contributed.

Richardson, through Miriam and in her essays, also questions the relatively high value a male-dominated culture places on art in general. "Men weave golden things; thought, science, art, religion, upon a black background," Miriam thinks in Revolving Lights. But "they never are. They only make or do; unconscious of the quality of life as it passes" (III RL 280). Similarly, in Dimple Hill, Miriam recalls Hypo Wilson's comment that men make gardens, and women love them. She admits that women do not produce like men do but, she asks, "is making





pictures and bridges, and thumbscrews, humanity's highest spiritual achievement?" (IV DH 464). Miriam's equation of pictures with bridges and thumbscrews is as jolting, perhaps, as Jeremy Bentham's equation of music and poetry with the child's game, push-pin.<sup>18</sup> Her tone, however, is different. Bentham makes an assertion of fact. Miriam, who, unlike Hypo Wilson, is fond of the interrogative, quizzes herself as well as other people; she becomes involved or involves others in her quest for reality. Bentham dismisses art along with more trivial pastimes and pleasures because they lack utility. Miriam dismisses the art men produce and value because it is produced and valued on a limited utilitarian and materialistic level, because it is one more manifestation of the male desire to produce practical, systematized, and superficially-neat structures out of an oversimplified and extremely limited world view. Miriam is part of a shift in the tradition of the artist in literature from a defense of art in a utilitarian society to a defense of nonutilitarian art in a society that has made even its art utilitarian.

The questions Miriam raises about the value of art reflect, as usual, Richardson's. "Worship of Art and the Artist is a modern product," she says.<sup>19</sup> Richardson confesses her faith in art; at the same time she cautions against both the separation of art from life and the development of rigid aesthetic criteria.<sup>20</sup> She objects to art as an exclusive category including only those works that meet certain inflexible requirements imposed upon the artist from without. He exhibits his skillful mastery of certain accepted techniques rather than seeks the most appropriate method by which to express his definition of reality. Richardson concludes that she dislikes "'art' in so far as it is slick, clever, facile and self-conscious."<sup>21</sup>



She contrasts men's "momentary arts," the products of "incomplete individuality" and ambition, with woman's art which is "the art of life, the social art, the art of arts."<sup>22</sup> Similarly, in Revolving Lights Miriam juxtaposes to art as men have defined it, women's sensitivity to and ability to create "atmospheres." Perhaps Woolf's reading and reviewing of this section of Pilgrimage provided the seeds that grew into Mrs. Dalloway's party and Mrs. Ramsay's dinner. Whether Woolf would agree with Miriam that creativity among men is the exception while among women it is the rule is another matter. Woman's art, Miriam says to Hypo Wilson, is "'as big an art as any other. Most women can exercise it, for reasons, by fits and starts. The best women work at it the whole of the time.'" Men, however, preoccupied with mere appearances rather than with the subtle relationships among things that constitute atmosphere, remain oblivious to women's creative activity: "'It's like air within the air....Men live in it and from it all their lives without knowing'" (III RL 256-7; III DL 100).

To Miriam the fact that women are creators of atmospheres provides one answer to the charge that they are inferior because they have not achieved in art. She points to the public nature of men's accomplishments as opposed to the relatively private nature of women's. She notes, moreover, that the material of women's art, unlike men's, is people. Nevertheless, she is equally concerned with pointing out the similarities between the arts of the two sexes. Women's art, like men's, requires consciously-learned skills and self-discipline as, indeed, Woolf's Orlando discovers when she changes sexes. Female artists, like male, must rest now and then from the strain of their work. Miriam compares the male artist's insistence that he occasionally must get





away from his work, sometimes into dissipation, with the woman's occasional need to be "'nothing to nobody, [to leave] off for a while giving out any atmosphere'" (III RL 258). One cannot help being reminded again of Woolf's Mrs. Ramsay and the relief she experiences when she is free of everyone else's demands upon her long enough to withdraw into herself.

Wilson doubts, however, that women are in control of their material, that even intelligent women have the detachment Miriam attributes to them. They are damned, he says, by their willingness to admire, marry, and quote the views of quite inferior men. Miriam replies that while women are not deceived by such men, neither do they lose their optimism. Working with whatever human material is available, their creativity often consists of imagining value where it does not exist or finding value where no one else would think to look for it. The fact that they may quote their husbands' opinions or the different opinions of a succession of husbands is irrelevant. They do so because they are indifferent to all that changes and secure in the permanence of their untouched inner lives (III RL 259).

Miriam fails to understand why society praises men's skills and pursuits when it either ignores women's or at least evaluates them very differently. For example, society mocks women's curiosity, because it is about people, as "'incurable'" while "'men's curiosity, about things, science and so forth, is called divine'" (III RL 260). Society labels the pursuit of women's social art "self-sacrifice" while the pursuit of men's art is called "self-realization." Miriam dismisses these distinctions. Men, she says, "'get an illuminating theory -- man must die, to live -- and apply it only to themselves.





If a theory is true, you may be sure it applies in a most thorough-going way to women. They don't stop dead at self-sacrifice. They reap...freedom. Self-realization. Emancipation'"(III RL 258). Like May Sinclair, Richardson suggests through Miriam that certain human experiences transcend sexual distinctions.

Miriam herself does not set out to master woman's art. An important distinction exists between woman's art and feminine realism. Miriam learns from observing and even from trying her hand that the products of such art are intangible; they cannot be read or framed or played upon a musical instrument; consequently, they go unrecognized and unvalued by the men who most need the kind of sensitivity and awareness they represent. Feminine realism is an attempt both to retain the curiosity about individuals and the sensitivity to relationships inherent in woman's art and to find a suitable way to express them. Miriam also learns that often a very fine line exists between the art of creating atmospheres as exercised by women like Eleanor Dear (III RL 284) and Alma Wilson (III RL 361) and an artificial, essentially hypocritical feminine social role. Miriam admires woman's ability to see value in everyone, but she hesitates to encourage woman's tendency to quote man's opinions and thus to perpetuate his inability to see that value. At this point woman's art, with all its conscious self-discipline and skill, becomes too much like man's art. While not the product of a partial world view, woman's art does little to correct it.

Moreover, woman's art has a tendency to decline into woman's artifice. The difference is suggested by an incident in Honeycomb. At the Corrie's Miriam encounters a photograph of an Englishwoman



posed in Grecian costume. Some people, Miriam realizes, would be tricked into admiring it.

Not the real people. There were real people. Where were they? That horrid thing [the photograph] could get itself on to Mrs. Corrie's drawingroom table, and sit there unbroken. All women were inspired in a way. It was true enough. But it was a secret. Men ought not to be told. They must find it out for themselves. To dress up and try to make it something to attract somebody. She was not a woman, she was a woman...oh, curse it all. But men liked actresses. They liked being fooled (I Hc 400).

The passage is cryptic and somewhat confused. Apparently, however, Miriam objects to the photograph because the woman so blatantly calls attention to her deceptions, so clearly uses her art to attract men. The distinction between "woman" and "woman" suggests a difference between the subdued inspiration growing out of a sensitivity to the inner life and to relationships among people that every woman can exercise if she chooses, and the flamboyant, superficially clever posing growing out of a knowledge of men and their limited view of woman as body. Woman's art may do little to correct the partial masculine view of the world, but woman's artifice openly encourages it.

At its worst, woman's art becomes, in Miriam's words, superficial "behaviour," a "trick," a "game." Women act "charming" especially in conversations with men in order to put them at ease, to shield them from any threats to their limited perception (e.g. IV DLH 158; IV DH 441; III DL 71; III RL 383). Miriam is as contemptuous of the men who demand this kind of behavior from women as she is of the women who agree to behave that way. Even Hancock, a man she respects, disappoints her by being attracted by every superficial feminine trick (e.g. II Tun 105). Observing one woman whose animated behavior has attracted him, Miriam concludes,





Nice kind people would call her 'a charming girl.'... 'Charming girls' were taught to behave effectively, and lived in a brilliant death, dealing death all round them. Nothing could live in their presence. No natural beauty, no spectacle of art, no thought, no music. They were uneasy in the presence of these things, because their presence means cessation of 'charming' behaviour -- except at such moments as they could use the occasion to decorate themselves. They had no souls. Yet, in social life, nothing seemed to possess any power but their surface animation (II Tun 174-5).

The passage suggests that woman's artifice actually is in competition with men's art, demanding and receiving the same kind of admiration and elevation on the basis of the same kind of superficial cleverness. Like man's art, woman's artifice obliterates both true art, produced by artists with a feminine conviction of the value of the inner life, and the natural beauty to which the inner life responds.

Miriam's own pattern is to experiment with feminine artifice, to achieve some success, then, in disgust, to shatter the illusion she has created. She charms Mr. Tremayne, for example, with Mendelssohn, creating for him a vision of "woman in a home, nicely dressed in a quiet drawing-room, lit by softly screened clear fresh garden daylight." Then, hungry for "the great truth behind the fuss of things," she begins to play Beethoven, abandons her graceful pose, pounds out the chords until her hair almost comes down, and leaves the young man aghast, his vision shattered (II Tun 27-8; cf IV O 82-3; IV DH 447, 492; IV MM 612, 622). The only time Miriam enjoys playing the charming social role is when she entertains women. Creating ease and comfort for them increases her sense of being united with other human beings (III Trap 454-5). The experience suggests that the narrow masculine view of women is what encourages the decline of the woman's art Miriam admires into the artifice she deplores.



Miriam refuses to exercise the woman's art of creating atmospheres to the extent that it involves the same kind of superficial cleverness and denial of reality that men's art involves; nevertheless, she is extremely sensitive to atmospheres, to relationships among people and among people and their surroundings. This fundamental aspect of woman's art she ultimately incorporates into feminine realism. Miriam notices atmospheres (a word recurrent in Pilgrimage) at the expense of the traditional factual materials which to her are the mere appearances that men notice and communicate. What is said and done, to Miriam, decidedly is secondary to her perception of the tensions and attitudes that animate or thwart relationships between people or between people and their surroundings. Sometimes Miriam perceives what is said and done as well as these tensions and attitudes. Sometimes she perceives only the tensions and attitudes and, because Richardson confines us to Miriam's consciousness, we are left to infer their causes and effects. In either case, the simultaneity of physical or verbal behavior, thought, and emotional response is communicated, whether directly or by implication. What Miriam remembers from Lycurgan meetings, for example, are the atmospheres (III RL 287); similarly, the "vitalizing atmosphere" of the Quaker meeting most impresses her (IV DH 422).

Much of Miriam's perception of atmospheres has to do with uncomfortable or ironic juxtapositions of the unspoken with the spoken. Her halting attempts to converse with the silent Mr. Parrow, for example, are juxtaposed to her thoughts (I Bw 310); the sympathy and understanding radiating from Mr. Corrie accompany his and Miriam's comments and Miriam's thoughts (I Hc 382); strain fills the room when Miriam attempts to share a moment of happiness with Mrs. Bailey, Mr. Gunner, and the





boarding-house dwellers (III D1 11-15); tension initially surrounds the meeting between Miriam and Michael and his friends, the Lintoffs (III RL 293). Miriam's mind does not dwell upon events, speeches, clever conversations, external portraits. If they appear, they do so because they have some significance involving her response to them, not because they have any significance in themselves.

Miriam not only notices the atmospheres surrounding people and their relationships but also the atmospheres animating things and places. Of the multitude of examples in Pilgrimage two will suffice. The German summer enters the school where Miriam teaches in Germany "like a presence."

It was everywhere, in the food, in the fragrance rising from the opened lid of the tea-urn, in all the needful unquestioned movements, the requests, the handings and thanks, the going from room to room, the partings and assemblings. It hung about the fabrics and fittings of the house. Overwhelmingly it came in through oblongs of window giving on to stairways. Going upstairs in the light pouring in from some uncurtained window, she would cease for a moment to breathe (I PR 158).

Another example is Miriam's relationship to London, a love affair that extends through several sections of Pilgrimage. London enters and remains a presence in her room (II Tun 16). Conversely, she feels "her life flow outwards, north, south, east, and west, to all its margins" (III RL 272-73). When she leaves her room, she moves about in her part of the city, feeling at home, independent, and free, feeling a kinship between its moods and her own (e.g. II Tun 29-30, 75-6, 266; Int 373-4; III D1 1-6-7, 114-15). She concludes, not surprisingly, that "no one in the world would oust this mighty lover, always receiving her back without words, engulfing and leaving her untouched, liberated and expanding to the whole range of her being"





(III RL 272).

As Miriam develops in the course of Pilgrimage, her ever-increasing sensitivity to atmospheres results in more and more complex passages. The more she experiences, the more multi-layered is her perception of any situation, the more multi-dimensional is the atmosphere she perceives. Past, present, future, thoughts, words, emotions, and sensations tumble together into increasingly rich and all-encompassing present moments. In March Moonlight, for example, Miriam reads a letter from Jean, a woman she met in Switzerland and to whom she became very attached. The letter sheds light on some confusing past incidents and causes her to recall them. She remembers the Bishop speaking to her then of "'the loveliness of this scene....'" But before she recalls the rest of his sentence, she considers the man's motives for speaking to her then, recalls even what she had recalled while he spoke, and imagines what her face looked like to him. Finally we learn the rest of his sentence: "'The loveliness of this scene carries one's thoughts to the world beyond our world.'" (IV 560-62). Miriam's perceptions of the atmospheres surrounding things and places also increasingly involve memory. She cannot help but compare the atmosphere surrounding Amabel trapped in her neat little kitchen with that surrounding Rachel Mary Roscorla moving serenely in her roomy kitchen (IV MM 602). And her "truant inward eye" turns from the brilliant electric lights and the atmosphere they create in Amabel and Michael Shatov's new house to the "evening's friendly glow" created by Rachel Mary lighting the lamps (IV MM 598-9).

Woman's art, then, is the art of life, the social art, the art of creating atmospheres. Feminine realism is the art of perceiving,



defining, and describing atmospheres in such a way that their importance is recognized. Men are unaware of woman's art, of the sensitivity to the inner life and to relationships between people and between people and things from which it springs. They depend upon and encourage the artificial manifestations of feminine social skill which have lost touch with the sensitivity that originally produced them and which have become neat formulas to perpetuate men's inadequate view of women. Feminine realism should enable men to distinguish between woman's art and woman's artifice.

#### Talent and Genius

"The artist's part is both to be and do."

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Aurora Leigh (1859)

"It has been forgotten that genius is not something that has fallen from heaven, but humanity itself."

Benedetto Croce, Aesthetic (1909)

To give the feminine consciousness tangible form, the female artist must use the male propensities to make and do. To keep making and doing in their proper subordinate place is her major problem. To solve it she must redefine several words traditionally used in connection with the process of artistic creation: "imagination," "talent," and "genius." Just as she questions the high value placed upon art as men have defined it, so Miriam questions the high value placed upon imagination. She makes no protest against the charge that she is not creative (III RL 369); indeed she denies having an imagination (III Trap 431) and equates it with lies (IV DLH 240). To her the word is a misleading one designed to make "writers look cut off and mysterious," an idea Miriam finds "insulting, belittling, both to the writer and to life." One of the reasons she admires Conrad is because he does





not make up his memorable phrases. They proceed instead from the inner life of his mind (III RL 276). She defines imagination as "holding an image in your mind" which has emerged there and then writing about it (IV MM 613). If a writer must make up his material, he reveals his lack of awareness of and confidence in the inner life.

The continual recurrence of the verb "imagined" preceding various sections of Miriam's thoughts belies her assertion that she has none. Most of the time she creates scenes and people she has never seen out of details remembered from her own past experiences, out of details pieced together from her present situation, or out of a combination of the two. Sometimes she has many details with which to work, sometimes very few. In the latter instances, she may be unaware of her sources; therefore, given Richardson's method, we also remain unaware of them. On the whole, an examination of Miriam's numerous imaginings reveals that her mind operates according to her own definition of the word. The dependence of her imagination on details from her own experience or at least details provided by other people is indicated by two of innumerable events. When Shatov confesses to her the details of his unsavory past, Miriam wants to "cling once more to the vanishing securities of her own untouched imagination" (III D1 209). He provides images with which her imagination can work, much, in this case, to her regret. Similarly, when Miriam receives a vague letter from New Orleans, she is annoyed at her sister for providing no details; without them Miriam cannot imagine her sister's way of life (IV CH 308-9).

Miriam decides that genius, like imagination, is something within, not some mystical higher power granted in order to elevate certain



individuals above others. She recalls that genius is supposed to mean "an infinite capacity for taking pains" and decides that the definition is inadequate (I Hc 413-14). Her response to one of Ibsen's plays suggests that genius has to do instead with the author's ability to make the reader share his fresh and vital awareness of life as a state of being (II Int 383-4). Miriam includes her conclusions about many of the terms used to describe the artist's creative process within a description of her own:

While I write, everything vanishes but what I contemplate. The whole of what is called 'the past' is with me, seen anew, vividly. No, Schiller, the past does not stand 'being still.' It moves, growing with one's growth. Contemplation is adventure into discovery; reality. Poetic description a half-truth? Can anything produced by man be called 'creation'? The incense-burners do not seem to know that in acclaiming what they call 'a work of genius' they are recognizing what is potentially within themselves. If it were not, they would not recognize it (IV MM 657).

In one of her essays Richardson notes that psychologists who insist that imagination always wins over will "seem to be oblivious of the concentration of will required to fashion and hold the image in place."<sup>23</sup> Her comment suggests that Miriam's definition of imagination as "holding an image in your mind" is not sufficient to explain feminine realism. Neither is her reconsideration of genius. Miriam implies but makes no explicit association between genius and women. Richardson is more explicit elsewhere. Like Miriam, she finds inadequate the definition of genius as "an infinite capacity for taking pains," a phrase she thinks defines not genius but talent. Moreover, contrary to the established opinion that genius is rare and talent common, Richardson insists that the opposite is true. "Genius exists potentially in every woman and is sometimes found in men," she says, while "many men and a few women have talent."<sup>24</sup> Genius she defines as





the ability to see and talent as the ability to do; the former she associates with the unconsciousness, the latter with consciousness.<sup>25</sup> Richardson thinks that both the quality of future civilized life and significant art are dependent upon a combination of talent and genius.<sup>26</sup>

The precise relationship between these two kinds of abilities is explored in an essay entitled "Talent and Genius." Talent, Richardson says, is most effective when backed by genius, but definitely can make an impact without it. Genius can have no impact without talent. Talent, as she puts it, is "the midwife of genius."<sup>27</sup> Richardson does not imply, however, that talent is the superior ability. Genius needs talent; at the same time, talent is a threat to genius. This fact indicates, not the superiority of talent, but its limitations, its inability to value what it so easily renders inarticulate. In the case of the female artist, Richardson thinks that talent has stifled genius, not by destroying it, but by failing to provide a vehicle for its expression:

The feminine intelligentsia, the product of fifty years "higher education," are usually brilliant creatures. There is a great show of achievement in the arts and sciences to their credit. Almost none of it bears the authentic feminine stamp. Almost the whole could be credited to men. But this blind docility, so disastrous to women, and still more disastrous to the men who mould them, is a phase already passing. Feminine genius is finding its way to its own materials.<sup>28</sup>

By redefining imagination, genius, and talent, Richardson in Pilgrimage and in her essays shifts the emphasis she detects in previous discussions of the creative process, from art elevated above life in the external world, to the inner life as the source of all art. Seen in this context feminine realism must utilize predominantly masculine skills or talent in order to give expression to predominantly feminine perception or genius. The former, however, must not be





allowed to obliterate the latter. Miriam is a good candidate for achieving the proper relationship between the two abilities. She realizes that she is "something between a man and a woman; looking both ways" (II Tun 187). She has the woman's sensitivity to atmospheres and an increasing awareness of the centrality of the inner life. She also has the masculine mind she often criticizes (III RL 236; III Trap 479). Like a man, moreover, she is decisive and strong. Her sister, Eve, admires her because of her independent decision to go to Germany and because she has no religion in the conventional sense (I PR 19). Hypo Wilson admires her masculine pleasure in beer and cigarettes (IV DLH 173). In London, Miriam has the freedom of movement usually attained only by men. Sitting in a cafe, she thinks of herself "as a man, a free man of the world, a continental, a cosmopolitan, a connoisseur of women" (II Int 394).

Indeed, Miriam's closest relationships with women often are like those of a man, a rare man, however, who values the feminine consciousness. The element of possible lesbianism is less significant than is the inclusive perspective, necessary to the female artist, that such relationships both reveal and foster.<sup>29</sup> With her mother, Miriam is the strong, understanding husband her mother should have had (I Hc 456, 471), or she is the son who gives his mother the understanding his father withheld (III D1 220). Miriam also plays a modified male role in her relationships with Eleanor Dear (II Tun 261; III RL 281-2), Mrs. Harcourt (III Trap 428), and Miss Holland. Rooming with the latter is for Miriam a "marriage of convenience" (III Trap 428) in which she remains independent like the husband and takes care of paying the rent while Miss Holland does all the domestic work. When Miriam



has to deal with other women more traditionally feminine and domestic than herself, she always feels like a man (III Trap 411-12). Always the more feminine of the two, Amabel in her kitchen reduces Miriam "to the status of a man, a useless alien" (IV MM 602). When, at the end of Pilgrimage, she holds Amabel's baby and thinks of her friend Jean's potential baby, she feels fulfilled and serene in a way that she has not felt with the babies of any of her sisters. Nor does she anticipate her own motherhood. The fact that Amabel and Jean are the two women with whom Miriam has been most intimate suggests, perhaps, that she reacts in part as a father.

Her combination of male and female characteristics is valuable in two respects. First of all, she is able to evaluate each set of characteristics from the point of view of the other as well as each from its own point of view. Her decision that the feminine characteristics are central and the masculine, peripheral, is not the product of any lack of comprehension of or even lack of attraction to the male characteristics. Secondly, as has been pointed out, her masculine qualities enable her to see the necessity of such abilities for the production of feminine realism while her feminine centrality enables her to control them, to use them merely to give expression to the feminine world view that she considers fundamental.

Richardson's insistence on the necessity of both genius and talent for the production of art is her version of the artist's androgyny that Woolf advocates in A Room of One's Own and that also emerges in the characterizations of both Woolf's and Sinclair's artists. Richardson's Miriam, however, is androgynous in a different way from Woolf's and Sinclair's artist-characters. Woolf's learn to





accept, balance, and utilize their equally-real male and female qualities. Sinclair's define themselves as overwhelmed by the element of the opposite sex within them, or they struggle, with varying degrees of success, for some kind of balance. Richardson's Miriam, as a female artist, learns to accept and utilize both male and female characteristics, but she does not consider them equal in value.

The lengthy description of her hands indicates as much:

They were not 'artistic' or 'clever' hands. The fingers did not 'taper' nor did the outstretched thumb curl back on itself like a frond.... They were long, the tips squarish and firmly padded, the palm square and bony and supple, and the large thumb-joint stood away from the rest of the hand like the thumb-joint of a man. The right hand was larger than the left, kindlier, friendlier, wiser. The expression of the left hand was less reassuring. It was a narrower, lighter hand, more flexible, less sensitive and more even in its touch -- more smooth and manageable in playing scales. It seemed to belong to her much less than the right; but when the two were firmly interlocked they made a pleasant curious whole, the right clasping more firmly, its thumb always uppermost, its fingers separated firmly over the back of the left palm, the left hand clinging, its fingers close together against the hard knuckles of the right (I Bw 283).

Miriam's left hand is less sensitive and more controlled, more competent technically. It seems, however, a bit foreign to her. It is the hand with masculine talent. The right hand is, by implication, more sensitive, less controlled, less competent technically. "Larger..., kindlier, friendlier, wiser," it seems more her own and is the stronger of the two. Given Miriam's view of feminine values as central, this hand can be associated with genius. It is important to note that Miriam's hands separate her from both man's art and woman's art, the social art. They are neither "'artistic'" nor "'clever.'" Since Miriam attacks masculine definitions of art, however, and devalues cleverness, the description hardly can be taken as a criticism. In



social situations her hands bother her because of their "lack of feminine expressiveness" and represent her isolation from the world in which more traditional women function (I Bw 283). However, with the control plus the wisdom and strength that her clasped hands reveal, Miriam has the instruments of the feminine realist, the minimum of masculine control necessary to give expression to the fundamental certainty of women.

The Destructiveness of Coercion:  
Point of View and Related Aspects of Feminine Realism

"'Souls,' [Maeterlinck] tells us, 'are weighed in silence, as gold and silver are weighed in pure water, and the words which we pronounce have no meaning except through the silence in which they are bathed.'"

Arthur Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature (1899)

"The novelist does not as a rule rely sufficiently on the reader's imagination."

Edouard in Andre Gide's The Counterfeiters (1927)

Richardson's remarks on the discovery of her method indicate that, of all the elements of the novel, point of view was her central consideration. From it, everything else follows. She suddenly discovered that she could not just describe her character because Miriam, as she first envisioned her, was alone.<sup>30</sup> In Pilgrimage Miriam's primary consideration also is point of view. Her concern, however, takes numerous related forms that initially do not seem relevant to the development of a theory of the novel. What she concludes about all of the various ways people have of communicating with each other tells us much about her own developing theory of point of view as well as about the choice of point of view that governs Pilgrimage. These conclusions also have implications for treatment of character and for various aspects of style.

Whether Miriam practices or observes teaching, speaking, story-





telling, reading, performing by interpretive artists, conversing, or handwriting, she discovers that the person who asserts himself as a superior is less effective than the one who establishes an atmosphere either of sharing knowledge that is the common possession of everyone or of discovering such knowledge together with others. Underlying all of her observations is a rejection of coercion. "It's not only that coercion is wrong; that it's far better to die than to be coerced," she thinks as she considers male-female relationships, "it's the destructiveness of coercion" (III RL 394). She goes so far as to call coercion "the unpardonable crime" (IV DLH 218).

Miriam often associates coercive self-assertion and attitudes of superiority with a lack of awareness of the stable inner life and therefore with male speakers, readers, and story-tellers. She says, for example, that

a man's reading was not reading; not a looking and a listening so that things came into the room. It was always an assertion of himself. Men read in loud harsh unnatural voices, in sentences, or with voices that were a commentary on the text, as if they were telling you what to think...they preferred reading to being read to; they read as if they were the authors of the text. Nothing could get through them but what they saw. They were like showmen... (II Tun 261; cf IV DLH 166).

Miriam likes clear pronunciation but not the kind of expressive reading that forces an interpretation upon the listener. To the "intelligent modulations" of men and women who imitate them, therefore, she prefers Mrs. Orly's "monotonous drawl" (II Tun 61). She concludes that the way to tell a story is "evenly and...without emphasis," a way that makes "no pause and did not disturb anything" (II Int 364). Miriam does find an occasional man who reads or speaks in the unprepossessing way she admires. Lionel Cholmley reads poetry (IV CH 273),





an unknown man speaks at a Lycurgan meeting (IV CH 340, 346), and Richard Roscorla reads from the Old Testament (IV DH 474) in a quiet and self-effacing manner that allows the texts or the ideas to speak for themselves.

Readers are not the only performers whom Miriam criticizes. She decides that English people "are not innocent enough to play" music. They are so self-conscious that they rarely listen to what they play (II Tun 127). Usually they approach it with preconceived notions about its quality, how it should be played, or how they will look and sound playing it (e.g. I PR 45; II Tun 125, 175-6). Similarly, actors display their own technique rather than the playwright's work (II Tun 179). Only a few performers she encounters, like the street musicians and Mr. Bowdoin in Interim (II Int 301, 369) and Vereker in Oberland (IV O 36, 76), put the work, not a display of their talent, first.

Miriam also rejects the conversant who asserts himself in a self-consciously superior manner. Again she associates the kind of communication she dislikes with men. She objects to the emphases in so much of their conversation on ratiocination, argumentative side-talking, and self-consciously clever, neat phrasing. To all such "fussing" she opposes intuition, unopinionated and unself-conscious conversation, and even silence. Miriam does not criticize masculine thinking and conversation from a position of ignorance and dislike. Occasionally she is attracted and admiring. Watching Hypo Wilson talk to two young men in The Tunnel, for example, she thinks that the conversation, however misguided, is motivated by a desire to get at truth (II Tun 116). To a certain extent, too, she admires the women who pursue and express knowledge after the fashion of men (II Int 354).



On the whole, however, she is more repelled than attracted. Men want less to get at truth than "'to score a point.'" Aware of this desire, women respond not to what men say but to everything they inadvertently reveal about themselves. Responses that seem irrelevant, therefore, really are not (III D1 170). Miriam repeatedly denounces "forcible quotable words," "clever, neat phrases," (III D1 14, 62) and "ready-made remarks" (III RL 311) that falsify life by systematizing and over-simplifying. Women's reputed lack of expressiveness merely is a refusal to concentrate more upon the way they say something rather than upon what they say (III RL 375). As usual, Miriam discovers a few men who can converse in an unopinionated and unself-conscious manner. Shatov's friend, Lintoff, for example, holds "his truths carelessly, not as a personal possession to be fought over with every other male" (III RL 312). His awareness of the inner life as most real explains his lack of the traditional male conversational manner (III RL 298).

Most importantly, Miriam discovers that significant communication can occur in addition to or in spite of conversation if the people involved have an awareness of inner reality. Such communication is most likely to occur between women, who communicate to each other their astonishment at "life in its own right at first hand" before they speak a word, while they observe the conventions of speech, and when they part. What they say to each other or the way they say it are relatively insignificant (II Tun 255; III RL 280-1). They may gossip, but such conversation is less poisonous than the "cosmic scandal-mongering" of men, the "centuries of unopposed masculine gossip about the universe" which they call science (III RL 367). Richardson, in an





essay that parallels Miriam's comments, says that women's conversation merely reveals their sensitivity to other people. She adds, however, that on the whole it is a protective device. Women's "awareness of being, as distinct from man's awareness of becoming, is so strong that when they are confronted, they must, in most circumstances, snatch at words to cover either their own palpitating spiritual nakedness or that of another."<sup>31</sup>

Sometimes women communicate the inner certainty they feel just in the tones of their voices. With her sisters, Miriam contemplates "the low, secure, untroubled tone of a woman's voice" and concludes that it contains everything of importance (I Hc 464). To Miriam the sounds of words rather than their meanings, words chosen for their individual sounds and put together to form patterns of sounds, communicate in a way that argumentation cannot. In the poem by Goethe that Fraulein Pfaff reads (I PR 99), in Shakespeare (II Tun 180), in the Russian language (III D1 43), in a Russian book translated into French (III D1 119), and in most of her other reading (III D1 131) Miriam touches reality by means of sound rather than sense. "'I can imitate any sound,'" Miriam says (III Trap 435), and the italicized stressed words, spelling according to pronunciation, sentence fragments, and onomatopoeia of the interchanges between people in Pilgrimage indicate that Miriam's sensitivity and facility is Richardson's as well.

Even better than woman's conversation and sound for the communication of reality is silence. "Life ought to be lived on a basis of silence," Miriam says, "where truth blossoms" (III D1 188-9). She is confident that people can communicate if they are patient enough to be still (IV DLH 145). The willingness to be silent, in fact, is the



test she applies to her relationships with various people and groups (III RL 389). Many of them fail the test. Silence is missing, for example, in her parents' home, her sister Sarah's home (IV MM 591-2), and at the Wilson's (III RL 341). Other people and groups, however, pass or at least submit to her test. Already in Backwater she is amazed when Max Sonnenheim accepts her silence in a way she had thought no man could (I Bw 219). The test of silence between herself and Shatov forces them to consider their relationship to each other and culminates in Michael's kiss (III DL 191-2). Miriam fondly remembers the silence of an old schoolmate (III RL 335), admires the silence of the Quakers (III RL 326; IV MM 620-1), of Dr. Hancock at work (III RL 385), and of Donizetti, the proprietor of one of her favorite restaurants (IV DLH 235). Miriam's relationship with Amabel, too, is based upon silence. Trying to explain about her to Hypo, Miriam

was deafened by the shame of the realization that in a moment she would have been telling him of their silences, trying to tell him of those moments when they were suddenly intensely aware of each other and the flow of their wordless communion, making the smallest possible movements of the head now this way now that, holding each pose with their eyes wide on each other, expressionless, like birds in a thicket intently watching and listening; but without bird-anxiety (IV DLH 245).

Miriam's emphasis upon silence is central to an understanding of feminine realism. She dislikes speaking most because she cannot say more than one thing at a time. Speech immediately sets up oversimplified limitations, artificial boundaries: "'All the unexpressed things come round and grin at everything that is said'" (IV DLH 164). Like Terrance Hewet's proposed novel, "'Silence, the things people don't say,'" in Woolf's The Voyage Out, Richardson's Pilgrimage is an attempt, paradoxical it is true, to express in words some of the complex tensions and certainties eddying simultaneously around speech, to





capture silence or atmosphere in words. "An epic poem might be written about atmosphere," Woolf says in Three Guineas, "or a novel in ten or fifteen volumes."<sup>32</sup> The method of such a work must not be the fictional equivalent of direct, self-assertive, argumentative, side-taking masculine conversation. It must be the equivalent, instead, of indirect, self-effacing, synthetic feminine communication. It may include a good deal of associative thinking and the seemingly irrelevant chatter that is its conversational parallel. Sound may communicate the author's reality, however, as much as, if not more than sense. The simultaneities comprising silence may be suggested by a prose that resembles, in its imagistic suggestiveness, poetry.

Richardson's conclusions about the silent as opposed to the sound film, expressed in a series of essays on the cinema written between 1927 and 1933, parallel Miriam's conclusions about silence as opposed to conversation and contribute additional information essential to an understanding of feminine realism. Richardson consistently defends the silent film and criticizes the sound film, then making its debut. Her preference for the silent film is based upon her belief that the significant experiences of life, the solitary moments during which man becomes intensely aware of the reality of the inner life, are silent.<sup>33</sup> Not only can the silent film communicate such moments, but it also can maximize viewer collaboration. Sound films, she implies, require too little of the audience.<sup>34</sup> If in the novel, Richardson participates in and perceives a shift from masculine to feminine values, in the film she sees a shift in the opposite direction, as the title of her culminating essay on the subject indicates. In "The Film Gone Male" she defines the early, silent film as "feminine" because





its quality of being nowhere and everywhere, nowhere in the sense of having more intention than direction and more purpose than plan, everywhere by reason of its power to evoke, suggest, reflect, express from within its moving parts and in their totality of movement, something of the changeless being at the heart of all becoming, was essentially feminine. In its insistence on contemplation it provided a pathway to reality.<sup>35</sup>

Whatever one thinks of Richardson as a film critic, her objection to a medium that begins both to ignore viewer collaboration and to display its technological virtuosity parallels Miriam's dislike of authoritarian stances and displays of skills in speaking, reading, and conversing. The inner reality that everyone shares disappears.

Some of the implications of this emphasis on silence are developed further in references to handwriting. Richardson might have liked to see certain sections of Pilgrimage presented as a silent film,<sup>36</sup> but she might have liked even more to have the entire thirteen sections circulated in her own handwriting.<sup>37</sup> Miriam is afraid that shorthand and typewriting are replacing handwriting (II Tun 47). She rails even against fountain pens as mechanical, male writing-machines (III RL 370), prides herself on the "picturesque addresses" she writes on the dentists' correspondence (III D1 104), and scrutinizes the handwriting of the people she knows (e.g. II Tun 47, 60, 77; III Trap 485; IV DLH 141-2).

Important to the development of her theory of the novel is her lengthy analysis of Amabel's handwriting. Amabel's letter to Miriam requires an inordinate amount of viewer collaboration. Amabel leaves gaps between the strokes forming a single letter, gaps between letters, and gaps between words. Just as Miriam focuses on sound rather than sense so, in reading Amabel's letter, she sees intensely expressive individual curved and straight lines rather than total meaning (IV DLH 214-15). She contemplates, for example, the word "Egypt" that Amabel



singles out for her attention. Miriam has trouble seeing it as "'beautiful'" until she realizes that Amabel sees not a word but separate, individually-pleasing letters (IV DLH 216). Most importantly, Amabel's handwriting does not get between writer and reader. Rather, the girl herself virtually is present, speaking and gesturing. The letter, Miriam concludes, is

Alive. These written words were alive in a way no others she had met had been alive. Instead of calling her attention to the way the pen was held, to the many expressivenesses of a given handwriting, apart from what it was being used to express, instead of bringing as did the majority of letters, especially those written by men, a picture of the writer seated and thoughtfully using a medium of communication, recognizing its limitations and remaining docile within them so that the letter itself seemed quite as much to express the impossibility as the possibility of exchange by means of the written word, it called her directly to the girl herself, making her, and not the letter, the medium of expression. Each word, each letter, was Amabel, was one of the many poses of her body, upright as a plant is upright, elegant as a decorative plant, supporting its embellishing curves just as the clean uprights of the letters supported the curves that belonged to them (IV DLH 215).

Miriam apparently is concerned with the way various forms of expression distance both the person communicating and the person to whom he communicates from inner reality. A person is most closely in touch with that reality when he is alone, silently contemplating it. He is close to it, too, when he is in the serene and silent company of another person equally aware. Speech places him at one or more removes depending upon whether the speaker shares truths with equals and refrains from calling attention to his manner of speaking, or whether he offers to inferiors his own limited opinion as final explanation and calls attention to his clever manner of doing so. The written word removes the physical presence of the person communicating and with it, his tone of voice, facial expressions, poses,





and gestures. If the person communicating is one who shares reality, then that removal is a loss. If he is one who coerces, then that removal is a relief from several additional distractions and displays.

Amabel is one who shares. Communicating in writing, therefore, would be a loss, except for the fact that, as her letter shows, the characteristics of the writer's actual presence can be incorporated into the handwriting. The handwriting can involve the reader in sharing and can suggest the writer's voice and corresponding visual poses and gestures. Meanings reside in these and not in the content of the letter, which we never know. What is important is that Amabel's letter is

Real. Reality vibrating behind this effort to drive feeling through words. The girl's reality appealing to her own, seeing and feeling it ahead of her own seeings or feelings that yet responded, acknowledged as she emerged from her reading, in herself and the girl, with them when they were together, somehow between them in the mysterious interplay of their two beings, the reality she had known for so long alone, brought out into life (IV DLH 217).

All Miriam's assessments of the various forms of communication involve her approval of people who appeal from their own sense of reality to that of others and who put no obstacles in the way. The analysis of Amabel's handwritten letter adds an emphasis on the actual texture of such communication. Even more than Miriam's emphases on sound over sense and silence over sound, her emphasis on individual visual shape over total meaning leads to a consideration of the relationship between individual parts and whole in Pilgrimage and in feminine realism in general. The individual parts of such a work, like Amabel's letter, have a vitality that makes them interesting in and of themselves regardless of the order in which they are encountered. Moreover, each part contains the sense of reality that



animates the whole.

Richardson perceives a close relationship between the visual and verbal arts, going back to the days of picture-writing,<sup>38</sup> and compares the novels she admires to works of visual art, to mosaics or tapestries. In an essay entitled "Novels," for example, she says that there are novels today that may be "entered at any point, read backwards, or from the centre to either extremity and will yet reveal, like a mosaic, the interdependence of the several parts, each one bearing the stamp of the author's consciousness."<sup>39</sup> Joyce's Finnegan's Wake, she thinks, is such a novel. The reader can open it at any point and, sharing the author's "innocence of eye,"<sup>40</sup> can "look innocently about"<sup>41</sup> without having to identify historical period, setting, characters, or point in the story. Instead he "finds himself within a medium whose close texture, like that of poetry, is everywhere significant and although, when the tapestry hangs complete before his eyes, each portion is seen to enhance the rest and the shape and the intention of the whole grows clear, any single strip may be divorced from its fellows without losing everything of its power and of its meaning."<sup>42</sup> Richardson describes her own work as similarly "all of a piece."<sup>43</sup>

The vitality of the individual parts of a work of feminine realism suggested by Miriam's perusal of Amabel's letter also has implications for the presentation of character. Because we are confined to Miriam's mind in Pilgrimage, we never get a formal, set description of her external appearance. Reality does not reside there. We get, instead, glimpses of her face, hair, or clothes as she looks in mirrors, the study of her hands as she contemplates them, observations upon how parts of her body or various garments feel as she moves,



brief observations, that her mind registers, made by other people about her hair or neck or figure. Aspects of her external appearance come to her attention, therefore, in fragments animated by her inner reality. When she observes the external appearance of others, too, she focuses upon fragments that suggest inner essence.

In March Moonlight Miriam asks whether or not it is "just that stopping, by the author, to describe people, that spoils so many novels" (IV MM 613-14). She objects to the dutiful writing of formal set pieces, complete and lifeless. External details are valuable only to the extent that they suggest what is essential about the person described and only if they are introduced informally and naturally, call into play the reader's imagination, and appeal to his sense of "life in its own right at first hand." When Miriam looks through Mrs. Corrie's sketchbook in Honeycomb, she finds visual parallels to both approaches to the presentation of character. She likes the small, quick sketches of various parts of the body, especially the "feet, strange things stepping out, going through the world, running, dancing; the silent feet of people sitting in chairs pondering affairs of state." And she likes the "eyes, looking at everything; looking at the astonishingness of everything." She dislikes the formal profiles and drawings of posed bodies (I Hc 421). They do not suggest the vitality of a person alive, whether or not he recognizes it, in an astounding world.

Miriam already has proved her preference for quick, informal, suggestive descriptions by an attempt she makes in The Tunnel to capture something she has seen.

How shall I write it down, the sound the little boy made as he carefully carried the milk jug?...going along, trusted, trusted, you could see it, you could see his mother. His legs came along, little loose feet, looking after themselves,





pottering, behind him. All his body was in the hand carrying the milk jug. When he had done carrying the milk jug he would run; running along the pavement amongst people, with cool round eyes, not looking at anything. Where the crowd prevented his running, he would jog up and down as he walked, until he could run again, bumping solemnly up and down amongst the people; boy (II Tun 256).

Miriam focuses upon the parts of the body, the legs, feet, and the hand carrying the jug. These communicate what goes on inside the little boy, his sense of responsibility, his concentration on being careful. Then she shifts her attention to the eyes of the running boy released and relieved of this unnatural need to take care. We need know nothing more about the boy's appearance to achieve a sense of his vitality and reality. Throughout the rest of Pilgrimage Miriam's mind registers other people in a similar manner, in fragments. She finds people's hands and foreheads particularly expressive. The technical term for her method is, of course, synecdoche. The whole that Miriam is so fond of suggesting by means of a part, however, includes more than external appearance. It includes the person's inner reality and the extent to which the person described is aware of the vitality of the present moment.

Related to Miriam's observations of different forms of communication are her observations of male-female relationships as a basis for the characterization of women in the novel. The superior stance assumed by the masculine realist in relation to his readers and characters is most evident in his treatment of female characters. Because the novel has been dominated by men or by women imitating masculine ways of thinking and expressing themselves, the characterization of women has been inadequate. Women, Miriam insists, "'can't' be represented by men.



Because by every word they use men and women mean different things'" (IV 0 92-3). Shakespeare's women, for example, are seen only from the outside, only in their relationships to men (II Tun 188-9). Equally unrepresentative are the "childish ignorant" jokes men tell about their wives (II Int 406-7) and the alabaster lady's forefinger, exquisite but lifeless, that is the conceited, posing Perrance's tribute to woman (III Trap 458, 460). Women, Miriam implies, must be represented by women who have not abdicated, who use the words men have created but use them differently, according to their own value system. Miriam, as we have seen only in part, takes one word after another and asks what it really means. Her questioning of such "sacred cows" in the masculine value system as "woman," "art," "imagination," "talent," and "genius," to name only a few, culminates in her own characterization in Pilgrimage. Richardson in her reviews is not quite so adamant as Miriam about the possibility of men being able to represent women in fiction. She sees hope for Wells and admires the Forster of Howards End.<sup>44</sup> Presumably only when a male writer stops feeling superior to women and acknowledges and values the inner life can he characterize them adequately.

Miriam's observations of different forms of communication are the foundation for a decision about where the feminine realist must place herself and her reader in relation to the character she presents. A character can be described only by the contents of his or her own mind. Any other method is presumptuous and necessitates a superior stance, an author getting between the character's inner reality and the reader's. Such an author imposes preconceived systems and categories, interpretations, and conclusions that the reader may not wish to accept and stifles





his imagination by giving too much information. The author who does so tries both to prove a point based upon a limited view of reality and to win admiration for the cleverness with which he does so. The outcome of Miriam's observations is the containment of the reader within Miriam's mind in Pilgrimage. That mind determines all characteristics of the book. Richardson is confident enough in the vital sense of reality her method creates to dare to present without comment all of Miriam's vacillations, exaggerations, and weaknesses along with her strengths. She is confident enough in the potential sense of reality within her readers to dare to appeal directly to it by eliminating most of the conventional props supporting the limited view of reality prompting masculine realism. Whether or not her confidence was justified is another question. The neglect of her work, as well as the continued neglect of her value system, suggest that it was not.

"Shapeless Shapeliness":

Story and Structure in Feminine Realism

"...the whole aim of Maeterlinck is to show how mysterious all life is, 'what an astonishing thing it is, merely to live.'"

Arthur Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature (1899)

"'That's what I want to get at in this book--the astonishingness of the most obvious things. Really any plot or situation would do. Because everything's implicit in anything.'"

Philip Quarles in Aldous Huxley's Point Counter Point (1928)

Feminine realism represents a shift in the definition of a character's reality from external appearances and behavior to inner awareness. It represents a parallel shift from a superficial world of events and facts arranged with a clear sense of past, present, and future, to the real world of atmospheres and impressions animating an all-encompassing present moment. Miriam's rejection of story, one of the major props of



traditional literature and contemporary masculine realism, rests upon her increasing disillusionment with the explanatory power of external events and facts as well as her increasing inability to see time as linear progression.

Miriam's suspicion of facts is, of course, part of her rejection of environmental explanations of human existence. Facts always seem to her to account for so little. They do not result from a close look at the world; they are imposed upon the world by people with preconceived notions (II D1 214). Confronting fact after fact, particularly those allegedly proving women's inferiority or their victimization by society, Miriam exclaims, "'Damn facts'" (III RL 393; cf I PR 78; III D1 69-70; III RL 287). Because they are arrangements of facts, she damns stories as well. She realizes that people want to hear about the unusual but ultimately unimportant happenings, not about the everyday occurrences that are most real (I Bw 265). Yet she knows that Eleanor Dear's story cannot explain her (III RL 285). Nor can Amabel's (IV DLH 247). The stories Miriam hears about other people strike her as irrelevancies or misinterpretations, bereft of "solitude, the marvellous quiet sense of life at first hand" (III RL 367-8). Consequently, she participates but at the same time delights in the frustration a listener feels when he confronts the circuitous, associational narrator who provides everything but the seemingly necessary facts (IV MM 569). And when she encounters a story, as in the opera, Faust, she finds meaning elsewhere, in the "scenes, each with their separate, rich, silent significance" (III D1 200).

Story implies to Miriam a chronology, a past that is past, a future that is imminent, and a present never fully realized. She, on





the other hand, discovers again and again that the past is not past and that the present is cumulative. She watches as "the early days flowed up, recovered completely from the passage of time, going forward with to-day added to them, for ever" (III D1 97; cf III D1 175, III RL 322-3). Into this endless present come childhood moments at the seaside or in a garden (I Bw 316-17; cf III D1 93; I Hc 392; II Tun 212-15; IV DLH 177). She insists that she is not remembering but living the same moment, and these moments give her the strongest sense of "life in its own right at first hand." Like Proust's Marcel, although in a less-systematized way, Miriam concludes that the mind's ability to accomplish this feat is evidence of something essential, eternal.<sup>45</sup> When Miriam writes she enters the realm of what Richardson in one of her essays calls "memory proper."

Memory, psychology is today declaring, is passive consciousness. Those who accept this dictum see the in-rolling future as living reality and the past as reality entombed. They also regard every human faculty as having an evolutionary history. For these straight-line thinkers memory is a mere glance over the shoulder along a past seen as a progression from the near end of which mankind goes forward. They are also, these characteristically occidental thinkers, usually found believing in the relative passivity of females. And since women excel in the matter of memory, the two beliefs admirably support each other. But there is memory and memory. And memory proper, as distinct from a mere backward glance, as distinct even from prolonged contemplation of things regarded as past and done with, gathers, can gather, and pile up its wealth only round universals, unchanging, unevolving verities that move neither backwards nor forwards and have neither speech nor language.<sup>46</sup>

Partly because Miriam sees no neat demarcations between past, present, and future, she sees no neat beginnings and endings marked by significant events in literature. For this reason she rejects comedies and tragedies. "Between women," she thinks, "all the practical facts, the tragedies and comedies and events, are but ripples on a stream"





(III RL 280, 303). Something more exists than circumstances; and that something more, that state of being, continues before the curtain has been raised and after it has been dropped. People, Miriam insists,

'don't feel pathetic; or never altogether pathetic. There is something else; that's the worst of novels, something that has to be left out. Tragedy; curtain. But there never is a curtain and, even if there were, the astounding thing is that there is anything to let down a curtain on; so astounding that you can't feel really, completely, things like "happiness" or "tragedy"; they are both the same, a half-statement. Everybody is the same really, inside, under all circumstances. There's a dead level of astounding...something' (III D1 146).

Only people preoccupied with process and progress measured by facts and events within a linear view of time define anything as tragic or comic.

If story is rejected, what provides structure in a work of feminine realism? The confinement of the reader to the consciousness of a single character provides unity, and the cumulative working of Miriam's memory provides some structure. As Miriam grows older she notices not only that she can live again moments of the past but that events repeat themselves with variation, that continuity exists within change.

Miriam comments upon some of these patterns and, because we perceive additional ones, we are encouraged to participate in her mental processes and in the structuring of Pilgrimage. She notices, for example, that Dr. von Heber's retreat from involvement in her life parallels Ted's some time earlier (II Int 434). She also sees in her budding relationship with Amabel, a certain similarity to her past relationship with Eleanor Dear (IV DLH 217). She remembers a whole series of domestic fires (IV DLH 249), a whole chain of servants to Mrs. Orly (IV CH 382-4), a whole series of blue flowers that have attracted her over the years (IV DH 485), and a whole series of Quaker meetings, "always the same; and always new" (IV DH 497). The older



Miriam gets, the more frequently a present moment causes her to relive a past moment or creates complex reverberations with a series of past moments. Pilgrimage, like memory proper, is cumulative, a pearl forming in the masculine world around the irritant that is Miriam Henderson.

Richardson says in an essay that the feminine consciousness has a "'shapeless' shapeliness."<sup>47</sup> The phrase is an appropriate description of a work of art that presents the feminine consciousness, a work like the one toward which Miriam aspires and like the one within which she exists. Feminine realism is shapeless in that it does not impose upon its material from without, structures that are the products of the masculine systems and stereotypes governing both external life and art. Most people, Miriam finds, unthinkingly accept such patterns. Their speech, thoughts, and lives have predetermined shapes. One of the most important discoveries Miriam makes as a developing female artist is that life has other kinds of patterns. These are perceived from within as they emerge in the course of living.

How can people talk about coincidence? How not be struck by the inside pattern of life? It is so obvious that everything is arranged. Whether by God or some deep wisdom in oneself does not matter. There is something that does not alter. Coming up again and again, at long intervals, with the same face, generally arresting you in mid career, offering the same choice, ease or difficulty. Sometimes even a lure, to draw you back into difficulty.... There is something always plucking you back into your own life. After the first pain there is relief, a sense of being once more in a truth.... Always in being thrown back from outside happiness, there seem to be two. A waiting self to welcome me (III RL 282-3).

Miriam is struck by "life's secret shape" (IV DH 549). At one point she considers the possibility that the shape might be a "zigzag" (IV 0 37), a vacillation, a moving back and forth. Continually she returns from the state of becoming back to the state of being, as the above passage indicates. Her masculine characteristics send her







in pursuit of facts and systems from which she always returns to atmospheres and impressions. She involves herself in various groups, "worlds," "islands" of humanity always to return to individual solitude, where she finds a perspective that includes all of them (cf III RL 233, 288; IV CH 331; IV DH 424). From a desire for communion and companionship with other people she returns to "lifelong loneliness" redefined as something positive (III RL 322). She finds herself helplessly swinging "like a pendulum" between her mother's and her father's temperaments. Both sides represent unhealthy extremes, II Penseroso without L'Allegro and vice versa (III RL 245-50). Related is her vacillation between Tory and anarchist positions (III RL 253). Because we are confined to Miriam's mind, its zigzag shapeliness provides the structure in the apparent shapelessness that is Pilgrimage.

Miriam says in The Trap, "I must create my life. Life is creation. Self and circumstances the raw material" (III Trap 508). Richardson's comments elsewhere underscore the coincidence between art and the inner life that is implicit in so much of what Miriam says. In one of her essays on the film, for example, Richardson notes that art is not an awesome external phenomenon but a spectacle of which every person alive is a part.<sup>48</sup> Every person, moreover, is a potential artist creating his own work of art, his life, not through action but through contemplation and memory. In a short story entitled "Excursion," Richardson's character asks,

Life makes artists of us all? No longer seeing experience chronologically, we compose it, after the manner of a picture, with all the parts in true perspective and relationship. Moving picture. For moments open out, reveal fresh contents every time we go back into them, grouping and regrouping themselves as we advance.<sup>49</sup>



Similarly, in a piece entitled "Old Age," Richardson asserts that "life makes artists of us all."<sup>50</sup> Everyone becomes an artist to the extent that he, with age, attains perspectives, sees relationships, and by doing so touches something eternal. Only the feminine realist, however, without distorting those perspectives by forcing them into some preconceived mold, combines genius and talent and makes them tangible. Living and contemplating life provide structures for works of feminine realism. Those structures are the feminine realist's matter as well as method.

#### Things Versus People: Setting in Feminine Realism

Feminine realism is based upon the assumption that a character's reality is his inner, not his outer life, and that the contents of his mind, not the facts and events of his life are of primary importance. Richardson does not imply that the external world is unimportant, merely that how and the extent to which it is important depends upon the quality of one's inner awareness. Miriam's sensitivity to atmospheres involves an acute awareness of tensions and silent communication between one person and another as well as between people and their surroundings. Her insistence that a state of being is most likely to be attained in silence and solitude, however, shifts the emphasis first from spoken to unspoken communication between people, and then from people, whose fussing usually obstructs any awareness of the inner life, to things and surroundings that foster the sense of "life in its own right at first hand." Miriam's increasing preference for things as opposed to people is part of her developing theory of the novel. The masculine realist, who sees people in groups, presents and defines people in general





according to their relations to other people and women, in particular, according to their relations to men. The feminine realist, in contrast, presents women in solitude, perceiving in a way that has been neither acknowledged nor valued.

The word "thing" (as well as "something") appears with great frequency in Pilgrimage. Miriam uses it imprecisely and chooses it, perhaps, because of its very imprecision. Sometimes it refers to tangible objects, sometimes to intangible presences. Sometimes it has negative connotations and is associated with a masculine value-system (e.g. III RL 340-1, 393). Usually, however, the connotations are positive. Usually Miriam contrasts things to people and associates things with what is essential and real as opposed to what is superficial and false. Reality is the thing or the something that Miriam feels hovering near when she is alone, contemplating objects and surroundings that trigger memory proper. She is furthest from reality when she is forced to perform a social role among people. Paradoxically, things are stable and silent, more like people as Miriam would like them to be, than are the people she usually sees making and doing, fussing and arguing around her. In feminine realism, therefore, setting takes on new importance, not because it determines one's life, nor for any intrinsic qualities, but in its interaction with the feminine consciousness.

In the early sections of Pilgrimage Miriam asserts her individuality against the demands that she devote herself to superficial relationships with other people by insisting that things are more important. She delights in the Brooms' old china and furniture (I Bw 342-3) and in her surroundings at the Corries' (I Hc 355, 363). Sometimes she thinks that she appreciates other people's things and surroundings more than





they do themselves (I Hc 468; III RL 332-3). Increasingly, however, she entertains the idea that in some ways "things, like beloved backgrounds, are people" (IV CH 367-8, 361). Her own few treasures, while separate from and preferable to other people, are inseparable from her, just as are the seashore and garden settings recurrently present in her mind. Similarly, she finds that she cannot think of Richard Roscorla apart from his surroundings (IV DH 546) or, in reverse, Vaud apart from Jean (IV MM 574). Readers of Pilgrimage undoubtedly find it difficult to think of Miriam apart from London. Things and places accumulate around them associations; they trigger memory proper and aid one in the recognition of the endlessness of the present moment.

Miriam applies her conviction about the importance of surroundings directly to the literature she encounters. She objects to the fact that most great novelists are concerned only with relationships among people (IV DH 416). When they show people alone, they do so "only to explain what they felt about other people" (III D1 128). The solution is not lengthy descriptions of setting. Miriam criticizes most of the novelists who write about the wealthier English social classes because, while they describe surroundings at length, they ignore the people's responses to them:

But in all the books about these people, even in novelettes, the chief thing they all left out, was there. They even described it, sometimes so gloriously that it became more than the people; making humanity look like ants, crowding and perishing on a vast scene. Generally the surroundings were described separately, the background on which presently the characters began to fuss. But they were never sufficiently shown as they were to the people when there was no fussing; what the floods of sunshine and beauty indoors and out meant to these people as single individuals, whether they were aware of it or not. The 'fine' characters



in the books, acting on principle, having thoughts, and sometimes, the less likeable of them, even ideas, were not shown as being made strong partly by endless floods of sunshine and beauty. The feeble characters were too much condemned for clutching, to keep, at any price, within the charmed circle (III RL 243).

Miriam concludes after a while that she herself is less dependent upon beautiful surroundings than she had thought (III RL 244). Nevertheless, surroundings, of whatever sort, remain important to her. Just as she pays attention not to the story but to Germany in the opera, Faust (III D1 200), so she finds Norway most important when she reads Ibsen's Brand. The external events of the play are less important than an inner, unchanging reality. The repository of this reality is the background, the mountainous landscape, more real than the people and their thoughts, endowing them with its life (II Int 383-4).

Feminine realism, then, involves a shift from the external to the internal reality of a character. It involves a corresponding shift from the superior author interpreting his characters on the basis of a limited world view and showing off his skills, to the author who shares his awareness of a stable inner reality with his readers, all of whom he considers at least potentially aware. This sharing does not involve an emphasis upon the external details, facts, and events of people's lives in social groups, according to a chronological view of time with neat beginnings and with endings that can be classified as tragic or comic. Instead, it involves an emphasis on the all-encompassing, endless present moment in which the past is ever-present within the solitary, contemplative mind as it responds not to people but to surroundings.





Trial and Error:  
Miriam's Struggle to Present Reality

Throughout Pilgrimage, Miriam tries to express in various ways the awareness of the stable inner life that is increasingly important to her. Her attempts form the final component in an understanding of her feminine aesthetics. Miriam does more than reject man's art; she also tries to evolve a positive alternative. Initially she merely tries to preserve her moments of perception for herself (I Hc 431). Later on, as she becomes more and more convinced that they represent reality, part of her motivation is the desire to make other people aware of it. She discovers that conflict with others as well as anger stimulate her to put her views into words (III D1 219, 101-2). Nevertheless, she has trouble finding the best medium or genre for what she wants to express, and, within each that she tries, she has trouble avoiding traditional methods. She moves toward what essentially is an unusually thorough-going organic theory of art according to which matter determines, in all important respects, manner.<sup>51</sup>

Miriam tries to express her awareness of the inner life in a number of ways before she considers the novel. She is versatile artistically. The idea of becoming a writer is in her mind from her school days (I PR 80, II Tun 166). But she also has a talent for mimicry and thinks of becoming an actress (I PR 109; I Hc 424). Moreover, an artist advises her to continue her painting and a musician to continue her music (II Tun 129). Not surprisingly, then, Miriam tries to express her definition of reality in water-colors and music as well as in words. Her experiments with the latter involve letters, conversation, translation, criticism, book reviews, other articles, and short, descriptive



fillers for periodicals. Her attempts to express herself, running concurrently with her observations of human communication and human relationships in general, teach her two related things. She learns, largely by trial and error, to subordinate any displays of herself or her skill to the reality that she wants most to communicate. In doing so, she achieves the proper degree of aesthetic distance.

In Honeycomb Miriam tries to express what is essential in the medium of watercolors. Yet even as she struggles with her paints, she realizes that her memory of the changing seascape she tries to portray is less a picture, than a "thing," an "experience," a possession of her own inner life (I Hc 431). Ultimately, therefore, she must turn from attempts to capture external characteristics of sea and sun and cliff to attempts to capture the internal responses to these sights. The indirect appeal to the visual faculty by means of words can accomplish what the direct appeal by means of paints cannot.

Music also is important in Miriam's life, as it is in Mary Olivier's. It is a somewhat more satisfying medium than watercolors for the communication of her sense of reality. The music Miriam plays on the piano triggers her cumulative memory and, when she identifies it with the reality in the music, provides a vehicle for its expression. As she plays in the shabby drawing-room of Mrs. Bailey's boarding house, for example, music brings forth "sudden abrupt little scenes from all the levels of her life, deep-rooted moments still alive within her, challenging and promising as when she had left them, driven relentlessly on" (II Int 334). Conflict again drives her to express what is real, to convince, in this case, the cold, forbidding room personified, of reality. She watches the room shift in attitude from affrontery to disgust as



she plays Beethoven. Only when she concentrates on the reality in the music and forgets the room does it become warm and welcoming. In a negative environment, then, Miriam creates a vital, positive atmosphere. In order to do so, however, she must concentrate not on the negative environment and her impact upon it but rather on the vital reality to which she gives expression. Miriam's didacticism becomes constructive rather than destructive: her most concentrated immersion in and expression of what she defines as real cannot fail to convince.

Words are a more recalcitrant medium than music. Miriam's frequent attempts to express what is most important to her in letters, for example, rarely satisfy. When she writes to her sisters, words get in the way rather than aid her. Often she finds herself quoting someone else's inadequate response rather than trying to express her own (I Hc 385-6, 431; II Tun 177-8). Similarly when she hastily writes a number of letters in Switzerland, only once does she break away from the traditional manner of expressing things as if they are past and done with and try to express, instead, "the living joy of to-day" (IV O 59). On her second trip she apparently is more successful. Just as Ibsen's Brand brings Norway to life for her, so her letters bring Switzerland to life for Rachel Roscorla (IV MM 585). Moreover, the descriptions of Switzerland she writes for The Friday Review represent satisfactory efforts to communicate what is essential (IV MM 610-11). As in the case of her music, Miriam's secret is immersion in her material as something vividly present and an ability to give spontaneous expression to the patterns inherent in it. It is the same ability that makes her a good parodist and imitator. She amuses herself by writing a letter parodying Madeleine Francis Barry, then explains how she does it:





"'You must not wait,'" she says, "'nor think of words. If you are in the mood they come more quickly than you could speak or even think; you follow them and the whole effect entertains you....You never know what is coming and you swing about, as long as you keep the rhythm, all over the world'" (II Int 420-1). Miriam tries to capture, in other words, some essential characteristic, then lets herself be governed by it.

The verbal medium Miriam most frequently uses to try to communicate her sense of reality in Pilgrimage is conversation. In the earliest sections, she merely remembers. More and more often, however, she tries to express in words the experiences she relives. Sometimes, to Mag and Jan's delight (II Tun 164) and Amabel's boredom (IV DLH 243), she adopts the manner of the person to whom she describes an experience. Much of the time she can make her listeners see only part of what she wants them to see. In Interim, for example, she tells Grace and Florrie and Mrs. Philps about the drunken Hindu in Mag and Jan's boarding house. So vivid is Miriam's recreation of the situation that she, as well as her listeners, laugh until they cry. Miriam, however, is not entirely satisfied with her success:

'When they write letters they begin, "Honoured and spanking sir,"' wept Miriam; 'they find spanking in the dictionary and their letters are like that all the way through, masses of the most amazing adjectives'....She was longing for Mrs. Philps to see the second thing, not only the funniness of spanking addressed to a civil servant, but exactly how spanking would look to a Hindu. If only they could see those things as well as produce their heavenly laughs (II Int 295-6).

Miriam cannot get her friends to glimpse the contents of the Hindu's mind. They see him only from the outside. Similarly when she tries to tell them about her trip to Switzerland, they can "accompan[y]



her into a life that for them was new and strange," but she cannot seem to make them see "how very strange was any life at all" (IV DLH 137). Again, she communicates externals, not the inner life with which they interact. She has trouble primarily because her emphatic, exuberant manner constitutes an interpretation of her experience and distracts her listeners from a contemplation of the reality she tries to present to them. At Christmas, for example, when she excitedly tries to tell Grace, Florrie, and Mrs. Philps about her favorite childhood toy, she finds, to her embarrassment, that their attention is focused not on it but on her (II Int 298-9). She discovers quite early that an unemphatic manner is less disruptive and more effective than her exuberance (II Int 364), but the consistent application of that discovery to her conversation is another matter. A quieter, more self-effacing manner does characterize her attempts to describe a Switzerland she has not yet seen to the Wilsons as well as her attempt to describe her life in London (III RL 363-4).

Translating, criticizing, and reviewing both provide Miriam with additional opportunities to express in words what she defines as real and introduce her to the way her mind works on the problems writers inevitably confront. In each case she realizes that her mind accumulates details, pulls fragments together into patterns, and achieves perspectives, often when she least expects it to do so. Miriam's sense of reality, to which the sense of reality in Andreyev's stories speaks, governs her completed English translation. She realizes that "the thing that held [the story] together in its English dress was herself, it had her expression, as a portrait would have" (III D1 143). To her it constitutes a journal of the period during which she worked on it. Her actual work goes





through three stages. First she does a "literal presentation." Then she concentrates on problems presented by individual parts. Finally, she achieves perspective, forgets the original altogether, and forms the parts into a whole. In the case of her criticism, the process is similar. She moves from a concentration on individual parts and problems to the achievement of perspective. "This was life!" she realizes. "These strange unconsciously noticed things, living on in one, coming together at the right moment, part of a reality" (III D1 133). In the case of reviewing, Miriam constantly must remind herself that, however hopeless her effort to comment on the book seems, the answer to her problem with it ultimately will emerge. The effort, she concludes, is worth expending because each struggle results in a piece of writing with a life of its own (IV CH 352-3). In each of these cases, Miriam eventually travels when she writes "down to that centre where everything is seen in perspective; serenely" (IV MM 619). She waits until the work she must translate or comment upon has become part of the accumulated contents of her mind. Then the feminine faculty for perceiving fundamental relationships and patterns can operate upon it.

Miriam makes her first attempt at a narrative, that, from all indications, might eventually turn out to be a novel on the order of Pilgrimage, in Dimple Hill. She has in her mind some advice given to her by Bob Greville already in Backwater. He asks her if she has ever considered writing and, as an example of what he means, mentions a best-selling book entitled The Confessions of a Woman (I Bw 268). When Miriam's attempt does not have the vitality of some of her articles and reviews, she blames her lack of success on his remark. Her pages



represented a chase, soon grown conscious of its own futility, after something concealed within the impulse that had set her down to write, bringing fatigue and wrath over her failure to materialize it in the narrative whose style was worse than that of the worst books of this kind. These tracts of narrative were somehow false, a sort of throwing of dust that still would be dust even if its grains could be transformed to gold; question-begging, skating along surfaces to a superficial finality, gratuitously, in no matter what tone of voice, offered as a conclusion.

Perhaps if she put it away and forgot it, it might one day be transformable into something alive all over, like the best of the articles for George Taylor, interesting to write and to read apart from the idea being handled, and best in those parts that ran away from the idea and had to be forcibly twisted back until they pointed towards it, or cut down to avoid the emergence of a contradictory idea.

Bob Greville. It was Bob, driving so long ago a little nail into her mind when he said, 'Write the confessions of a modern woman,' meaning a sensational chronicle with an eye, several eyes, upon the interest of sympathetic readers like himself--'Woman, life's heroine, the dear, exasperating creature'--who really likes to see how life looks from the other side, the women's side, who put me on the wrong track and created all those lifeless pages. Following them up, everything would be left out that is always there, preceding and accompanying and surviving the drama of human relationships; the reality from which people move away as soon as they closely approach and expect each other to be all in all (IV DH 524-5).

Some day Miriam might make her narrative live if she can forget Bob Greville's idea, immerse herself in the reality she wants to communicate, and trust her work to emerge. The Confessions of a Woman that Miriam will write will not be life as men define it seen from the woman's point of view. Instead it will be life as women define it from the point of view of a woman able and determined to use a minimum of masculine talent in order to express it.

Miriam's struggle to express the sense of reality so important to her is a continual struggle against alien ways of thinking and expressing those thoughts. She discovers over and over again in the course of her pilgrimage that a relationship exists between a person's spiritual state or state of mind and the way he expresses himself.





Her actual statement of the discovery, however, is the result of examining both different languages and different dialects within languages. English dialects, she insists, are "'born of a spiritual condition. A state of mind, if you prefer. But,'" she adds, "'the condition and the technique are so closely akin that you can actually make discoveries about the state of mind by experimentally adopting the technique. It is, up to a point...true, that if you speak a certain way you will feel correspondingly'" (IV DLH 164).

Applied to writing, Miriam's comment suggests that you can imitate another writer's method only up to a point. Beyond that point is discomfort. Her view of method or style is that the writer follows the rhythms of his own thought and speech, senses by means of a "spiritual metronome" when he departs from them, and makes alternations accordingly (IV CH 352). He does not study style, then consciously and cleverly write according to his preconceptions. Men write this way, Miriam concludes, but women must not do so: "To write books, knowing all about style," she thinks, "would be to become like a man. Women who wrote books and learned these things would be absurd and would make men absurd" (II Tun 130-1). Just as she prefers the unplanned city, London growing according to its own laws, to the planned city of the future (III RL 235-6), so she prefers the work of art that finds its own form. If a writer immerses himself in inner reality and writes, any direction he takes will reflect that reality and meaningful patterns inevitably will emerge (cf IV DLH 171-2).

Ultimately Miriam advocates not total ignorance of technical and stylistic matters but a minimal preoccupation with them. She herself follows a "laboriously acquired creed" when she writes reviews: "'Beware





of verbs 'to be' and 'to have' and of 'which'; begin article with adverb; pile up modifications in front of verb to avoid anticlimax; keep gist of sentence till end'" (IV CH 354). Richardson follows this creed herself throughout much of Pilgrimage.<sup>52</sup> The creed, however, hardly is an exacting one. Miriam's scorn for perfectly enunciated speech and beautifully executed handwriting (IV 0 38; IV DLH 165-6) probably can be extended to the scrupulous observance of the rules of grammar and punctuation. Richardson's essay, "About Punctuation," suggests as much. She admits that the mechanically printed page is efficient but thinks that, in general, it also is responsible for a "less organic, more mechanical" way of reading. She is somewhat nostalgic about the days when the spelling and punctuation of writers, with the exception of scholars, was inconsistent. Yet she notes that inconsistency has not been obliterated altogether. Certain irregularities in grammar and punctuation, like sentence fragments, "and" used at the beginning of a sentence, and variability in the use of the comma, continue to be effective. Richardson's test of effectiveness is the extent to which reader involvement is encouraged.<sup>53</sup> In her Foreword to Pilgrimage she notes that her own inconsistencies in punctuation have been regularized; nevertheless, she insists that "feminine prose, as Charles Dickens and James Joyce have delightfully shown themselves to be aware, should properly be unpunctuated, moving from point to point without formal obstructions" (I 12).

Related to Miriam's struggle to express her sense of reality in the most direct and vital manner possible is the problem of aesthetic distance. Miriam very early becomes aware of the popular analogy between life and the stage. She continually is conscious of her own



tendency and that of other people to play roles in social situations. These roles, however, strike her as artificial and remind her of the kinds of novels and plays she finds inadequate as representations of reality. To be detached enough to recognize the existence of this perpetual role-playing, scene-setting, and human drama is not a sufficient foundation for the kind of art Miriam wants to create. Such detachment prompts the superior amusement or cynicism she so dislikes in a writer.

Evidence of Miriam's detached recognition of her own role-playing and that of others is abundant. A few examples suffice to suggest the direction of her development. At the Corries', at her sisters' wedding, and at work she recognizes herself in roles from various types of novels (I Hc 439-40, 446; I D1 52). Increasingly, however, she contrasts the role as it has been written from the outside with her view of that role from the inside. When Michael Shatov kisses her, for example, she immediately realizes "the celebrated nature of her experience." At the same time, she is aware that nowhere has that experience been described adequately (III D1 192). Similarly, when she returns with Michael from Faust, she sees her relationship with him as parallel to Margaret's with Faust. Yet she notes significant differences (III D1 201). Instead of being content with knowing that a performance goes on, Miriam increasingly is aware of what transpires behind the scenes (e.g. III RL 274). She is aware that perpetual role-playing and scene-setting like that of the Wilsons and their guests in Revolving Lights is merely a means of "distracting attention from the realities that persisted within" (III RL 309).





During one moment at the Wilsons', however, Miriam senses an analogy between life and a different kind of stage. Then she plays

her part without cost, independent of sight and hearing and thought. Successful. Dreamily watching a play, taking a part inaudibly dictated, without effort, seeing it turn into the chief part, more and more turned over to her as she lay still in the hands of the invisible prompter; withdrawn in an exploration of the features of this state of being that nothing could reach or disturb. If, this time, she could discover its secret, she would be launched in it for ever (III RL 364-5).

The secret is that the theater of life does not merely present the external appearances and behavior of people in their relationships with other people. It is, instead, "a theatre, without walls" with Miriam's "known world and all her memories spread, fanwise about her, all intent on what she saw, changing, retreating to their original form, coming forward, changing again, obliterated, and in some deep difficult way challenged to renewal" (III D1 78). Miriam's theater of life presents all of her past experiences and backgrounds simultaneously at the present moment, allowing the relationships among them to become clear. It presents what transpires behind the scenes as well as on the social stage, inside people as well as outside, in solitude as well as in public, in their relations to themselves and to their surroundings as well as in their relations to other people. Miriam must see her life and life in general as this kind of theater before she can be successful in her struggle to express "life in its own right at first hand."

In 1924 Richardson published a short poem entitled "Truth" which can serve as a manifesto of feminine realism:

There is no truth but mine to make me free.  
And free I am, since my truth shows me bound.  
Being is freedom, passing step by step  
To sudden flight and falling.  
Falling and flight again. Whatever moves  
Is free, and all things move, led by their mystery.



The smallest step sets free to be aware  
Of their soft breath when roses fill the air.<sup>54</sup>

Without reading too much into a slight poem, we can see that it is an assertion of individuality. More specifically, it is an assertion of the truth and the reality of the individual's awareness of "life in its own right at first hand." The poem gives no indication of the provocation, but the remainder of Richardson's work, particularly Pilgrimage, suggests that it might be read, at least in part, as a woman's resounding assertion of undamaged individual awareness in the face of a masculine value system that dismisses her as part of an inferior group good only for reproductive purposes and that imposes upon her numerous legal, economic, and social restrictions. Miriam, in The Trap, wonders if a way of life exists which reconciles determinism and free will (III Trap 453). She finds hope in the enlargement of individual awareness. An exposure to and a recognition of both freedom and bondage provides the artist that life makes of each of us, with the material out of which to form patterns. The pattern within which the truth of the inner life shows us bound has a zig-zag shape, a continual alternation between elevating moments during which the stability of the inner life is perceived and moments when that stability is submerged in an emphasis on step-by-step process, between moments of freedom and moments of imprisonment in partial truths. The images of freedom and flight, imprisonment and enclosure, appear frequently in Pilgrimage as Miriam moves step by step to moments of flight, but falls back to a state of becoming which increasingly is unable to limit her, which, in fact, increasingly is perceived as dependent upon and encompassed by the state of being.





So with the production of a work of feminine realism. Utilizing the male desire to take language and do something with it, the female artist, according to Richardson's definition, makes visible the woman's awareness of the stable inner life, hitherto unrecognized, unvalued, exercised only in woman's social art, and distorted too often into woman's artifice. The female artist binds herself to masculine talent long enough to give expression to feminine genius. But feminine genius with its ability to perceive patterns in the inner life continues to control and to govern that talent. The patterns are the focus of attention, not the artist's superior understanding of or skill in ordering what is perceived wrongly as chaos. These patterns structure the work of art the female artist produces, not any superficial patterns, products of a partial masculine view of reality, imposed from without.

Feminine realism is, paradoxically, an exercise in both humility and egoism. It is an exercise in egoism, like so many words in Richardson's work, redefined. As Miriam says in The Trap,

The only sureness in things is the action of one's own spirit.  
Egoism? But egoism carried far enough.

Whoso would save his life must lose it. But not for the sake  
of saving it. And first he must have a life he loves well  
enough to make it worth losing....

Insufficient egoism keeps people plaintive....Egoism must be  
huge. Free from self (III Trap 465).

The masculine realism which Richardson and her female artist-character, Miriam Henderson, react against is the product of insufficient egoism. The feminine realism with which they counter it is the product of an inner awareness of permanence so intense that the individual willingly subordinates herself to it. That subordination governs both the matter and the manner of feminine realism in general and Richardson's Pilgrimage in particular.





C. "Stream of Consciousness":  
May Sinclair and Dorothy Richardson

"[Freud] was seeking for the unknown sources of the mysterious stream of consciousness. Immortal phrase of the immortal James! Oh stream of hell which undermined my adolescence!... I felt it streaming through my brain, in at one ear and out at the other. And again I was sure it went round in my cranium, like Homer's Ocean, encircling my established mind. And sometimes I felt it must bubble up in the cerebellum and wind its way through all the convolutions of the true brain. Horrid stream! Whence did it come, and whither was it bound? the stream of consciousness!"

D.H. Lawrence, Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious (1923)

May Sinclair was the first to label "stream of consciousness" the development in the novel of which Richardson is an important representative. Like Richardson, Sinclair thinks that such novels get closer than do more traditional novels to reality. She discusses the issue in two essays,<sup>1</sup> creates novelist-characters who write the more traditional kind of psychological novels, creates, in addition, a novelist-character who experiments with the new method, and experiments with it herself. Christopher Vivart's description in Far End (1926) of his experiment is an elaborated composite of Sinclair's two essays on the subject. His experiment occurs in 1919, the publication date of May Sinclair's Mary Olivier, her own first attempt at such a novel.

Richardson's work was well-known to Sinclair. Her essay, "The Novels of Dorothy Richardson," first appeared in 1918.<sup>2</sup> Sinclair is among the few critics who defend Richardson as an artist. Richardson, as her essays and her characterization of Miriam Henderson in Pilgrimage suggest, immerses herself in the inner life that she considers reality, rights herself when she feels that she obscures it or



departs from the patterns inherent in it, and follows no carefully-formulated plan imposed from without. Sinclair immediately comprehends this method. Her comments imply, moreover, that it is no less demanding than are the traditional methods and that Richardson is no less an artist than are her more conventional predecessors and contemporaries. In the first place, she must efface herself and present only what she imagines to be the contents of her character's mind:

By imposing very strict limitations on herself she has brought her art, her method, to a high pitch of perfection, so that her form seems to be newer than it perhaps is. She herself is unaware of the perfection of her method. She would probably deny that she has written with any deliberate method at all. She would say: "I only know there are certain things I mustn't do if I was to do what I wanted." Obviously, she must not interfere;...she must not tell a story, or handle a situation or set a scene; she must avoid drama as she avoids narration. And there are some things she must not be. She must not be the wise, all-knowing author. She must be Miriam Henderson. She must not know or divine anything that Miriam does not know or divine; she must not see anything that Miriam does not see. She has taken Miriam's nature upon her. She is not concerned, in the way that other novelists are concerned, with character. Of the persons who move through Miriam's world you know nothing but what Miriam knows . . . . They are presented to us in the same vivid but fragmentary way in which they appeared to Miriam, the fragmentary way in which people appear to most of us. Miss Richardson has only imposed on herself the conditions that life imposes on all of us.<sup>3</sup>

Sinclair finds it easier to define Richardson's method by describing what she does not do; nevertheless, she attempts to describe the method in positive terms as well. She agrees that Richardson's works have no beginnings, middles, or ends, but not that this characteristic is a deficiency. Richardson achieves something else altogether. Sinclair's attempt to describe the continuity of Miriam Henderson's consciousness in Pilgrimage reverberates through much subsequent criticism of the novel. In Richardson's work, she says, "there is no drama, no situation, no set scene. Nothing happens. It





is just life going on and on. It is Miriam Henderson's stream of consciousness going on and on."<sup>4</sup>

Sinclair considers Richardson successful in her attempt to eliminate her own judgments and superior knowledge as well as her own linguistic and structural mannerisms. She confines us to the world of Miriam's sensory impressions through much of Pointed Roofs and, in doing so, achieves the vividness and intensity that Sinclair also considers one of the main strengths of Imagist poetry and one of the main criteria for poetry in general. Just as Sinclair sees Imagist poetry as incorporating the directness of prose, so she defends the novel's incorporation of the intensity and concentration of Imagist poetry. She sees Richardson not only as imposing severe limitations upon herself by presenting directly a single consciousness but also as demonstrating a relatively high degree of selectivity. Ignoring neat series of events in time, she compresses much time into a few words, sentences, or paragraphs, barely mentioning events that ordinarily might be considered crucial. On the other hand, she draws out a few moments to cover many paragraphs and pages. Always, however, she selects with a purpose.<sup>5</sup>

Richardson was aware of Sinclair's application to her work of the metaphor, stream of consciousness, and on several occasions expressed her dissatisfaction with it. Lawrence, who associates the phrase with the psychoanalysts' attempts to make conscious what ought to be left unconscious, sees it as a threat to his mental and moral stability. Less subjective, Richardson objects to the implications in the phrase of unmitigated flux, of process unalleviated by any perception of unity or stability.<sup>6</sup> Sinclair, however, agrees.



That she recognized the importance in Richardson's work of a central, stable inner reality is indicated by the brief discussion of Richardson's form of mysticism that concludes her essay on Pointed Roofs. When she applied the term stream of consciousness to Richardson's work, therefore, she must have intended it in a sense different from what Richardson thought and different from what much later usage by critics indicates.

Sinclair borrowed the metaphor from William James. He introduces it to explain the third of his "five characters in thought." Preceding it are his observations that "every thought tends to be part of a personal consciousness" and that "within each personal consciousness thought is always changing." His third observation is that "within each personal consciousness thought is sensibly continuous."<sup>7</sup> Every consciousness, he says, even after a time gap, feels that it is the same consciousness. Moreover, changes within the consciousness are gradual. Therefore

consciousness . . . does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as "chain" or "train" do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It is nothing jointed; it flows. A "river" or a "stream" are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life.<sup>8</sup>

To James, then, the metaphor suggests the consciousness's sense of its own continuity and unity.

Both James and Sinclair intend by the metaphor to suggest not only what Sinclair, four years later in The New Idealism, calls primary consciousness but also what she calls secondary consciousness. Primary consciousness is the contents of the mind apart from any awareness of or reflection upon them. Secondary consciousness is



consciousness conscious of itself (NI 274-5, 290-1).<sup>9</sup> In this case consciousness is aware of itself as unified.<sup>10</sup> Sinclair's other book of philosophy, however, published one year before the appearance of the essay on Richardson, anticipates the full working out of the distinction between primary and secondary consciousness. In that book, moreover, Sinclair refers specifically several times to the idea that consciousness can be represented by a stream. Her comments indicate an awareness of the weaknesses as well as the strengths of the metaphor. Also clear is that to her as to William James the metaphor suggests unity as well as flux. "Say that consciousness is nothing but a stream, and that though it appears to have islands in it, the islands are really only part of the stream; still the stream would not be a stream if it had not a certain unity," she says (DI 38).

She recognizes, however, that the metaphor may be more misleading than illuminating, that it does not suggest unity sufficiently well. Dealing with McDougall's criticisms of the psychical monists' position, in which he constantly uses the phrase stream of consciousness, she observes that "the fact of the unity of consciousness can certainly not be accounted for or explained on the simple theory of consciousness as a stream or streams, or as any sequence or even conglomeration of merely 'associated states'" (DI 80). Even psychical monists, she notes, admit as much. One of them, who cannot find the necessary unity in the idea of a stream, suggests "'psychical dispositions' as a substitute for a soul." But, Sinclair says, "psychical dispositions must either also be part of the stream or streams; in which case it is not easy to see how unity is to be got out of them; or they must be 'raised to the rank of extra mental realities'" (DI 80).





Both McDougall and the psychical monists, she concludes, "look upon consciousness both as a stream and as something essentially disjointed; and they all cry aloud for something to 'hold it together.'" McDougall, who raises the question of unity also raises the question of unconsciousness. The problem is that "a stream of consciousness, even with central whirlpools in it of psychical dispositions, cannot have periods or even moments of unconsciousness without ceasing to exist" (DI 81).

As a description of the working of the mind, therefore, stream of consciousness seems to create as many problems as it solves. James intends the metaphor to suggest the consciousness aware of itself as unified, but precisely in that respect is the metaphor insufficient. Discussing M. Janet's idea that all mental illnesses are the results of dissociation of an idea from its context or a mental state from the stream of consciousness as a whole, Sinclair toys with the metaphor and shifts to another. When she considers the existence of fixed ideas, instincts, memories, and obsessions, she notes that

if we are to keep the image of consciousness as a "stream" we had better say that they sink to the bottom and stay there until some eddy in the deep stirs them up again. You can reverse the image . . . and think of consciousness as some city of the sea, raised on land partly submerged, partly reclaimed from the sea; a sea that threatens perpetually to overflow the thresholds of its palaces (DI 258).

Richardson offers "a pool, a sea, an ocean," and even a fountain as alternate metaphors that suggest unity, centrality, stability, and depth better than does the stream.<sup>11</sup> She also suggests a tree, whose "central core, luminous point, . . . though more or less continuously expanding from birth to maturity, remains stable, one with itself thruout life."<sup>12</sup> Woolf's use of the ocean in The Waves and the oak



tree in Orlando might be examined in this context.

Sinclair, then, must have applied the phrase stream of consciousness to Richardson's work with certain reservations in mind. She must have meant it to suggest consciousness aware of itself as unified in the manner of William James. Or she might have thought that, even with its weaknesses, the metaphor is appropriate when applied to Pointed Roofs, the first of the thirteen sections of Pilgrimage. At this early stage in Miriam's mental development, primary consciousness does take precedence over secondary. Miriam does experience the ecstatic moments during which she perceives reality but she is less likely to reflect upon them as part of a meaningful pattern than she is in later sections of the novel. Whatever the case, both Sinclair and Richardson agree that if the metaphor does not suggest sufficient unity, centrality, and stability, it had better be modified, or abandoned and replaced.

Sinclair's comments on Bergson in The New Idealism further suggest that she is essentially in agreement with Richardson on this point. Richardson, as well as Woolf and various other writers of psychological novels are associated with Bergson's theories with varying degrees of inaccuracy.<sup>13</sup> Sinclair credits Bergson with introducing space and time into the discussion of memory (NI 43-4). Moreover, she takes her place at the side of her philosopher-character in The Rector of Wyck who insists that space and time are not "'qualitatively different,'" as an attacker of Bergson's theories says they are.<sup>14</sup> All modern philosophy, she thinks, has been moving toward such a synthesis (NI 220). Such a movement is acceptable, so far as it goes. Sinclair remains dissatisfied, however, with Bergson as well





as with thinkers as different as Whitehead, Alexander, and Einstein, because they minimize the importance of the stable, unified self. For this reason their various systems contain contradictions that cannot be resolved or tolerated. Bergson substitutes for the self, pure time, and attributes to it the continuity and duration that are characteristics of the self or the consciousness. He reduces the self to action happening in pure time, and defines reality as a state of becoming rather than a state of being. Sinclair admits that

in action, in life taken in the thick as it is lived, we do get a fusion of perception and of memory and interest and will, of time and space, in a continuity and oneness which knows nothing of the contradictions, the dilemmas, the presuppositions, the infinite dividings and limitings of the intellect.

It is no less true that neither Life nor action in itself will deliver the secret of that fusion and that continuity (NI 63).

Sinclair, in other words, insists upon uniting the synthesis of space and time with an emphasis on consciousness. She thinks that metaphysical idealism, in fact, is saved by the attempts of recent philosophers to leave out the mind. The failure of their experiment necessitates a re-examination of the old idealist positions, as well as a reintroduction of consciousness as the only way of solving the contradictions inherent in the experiment. Only consciousness can provide the continuity and duration that everyone experiences and that philosophers seek to explain (NI 225-7).

Richardson's emphasis on consciousness is what most attracts Sinclair to her work. She does not think that Richardson's concern with presenting directly the unity and reality that is the inner life is unique among writers of fiction. Instead, Sinclair sees her, as Richardson saw herself, as an independent part of an increasing



tendency to delve into the mind. She is preceded by writers like the Goncourts and Marguerite Audoux and equaled, among her contemporaries, by Joyce.<sup>15</sup> Traditional labels like "objective" and "subjective," "form," and "substance," are inadequate when one attempts to describe this tendency. Sinclair notes that in the novel

what we used to call the "objective" method is a method of afterthought, of spectacular reflection. What has happened has happened in Miriam's bedroom, if you like; but only by reflection. The first-hand, intimate and intense reality of the happening is in Miriam's mind, and by presenting it thus and not otherwise Miss Richardson seizes reality alive. The intense rapidity of the seizure defies you to distinguish between what is objective and what is subjective either in the reality presented or the art that presents.<sup>16</sup>

Sinclair's second essay on developments in the novel appears in 1921 in a book edited by Meredith Starr. Sinclair focuses her attention primarily upon the kind of novel being written by Richardson and Joyce in which the author renounces his stance as "God Almighty" and limits himself to the consciousness of a single character. She concludes, on the whole, that the advantages of the method outweigh its limitations. The confinement of the reader to one character's consciousness with its peculiar biases and lapses, for example, prevents him from knowing more about the other characters than that consciousness knows. Sinclair thinks that this limitation is offset by the greater vitality and reality of the one character whom we do know. Moreover, she suggests that the author, because he inevitably is more knowledgeable than his character, somehow will communicate some of the discrepancy between what the character sees and what a situation or person actually is like. And, while unifying such a work might be a problem, it may be possible to present several consciousnesses, all equally important.<sup>17</sup> While Sinclair does not agree





that a novel presented from the standpoint of a single consciousness precludes action, she thinks it might preclude comedy. If a single consciousness belongs to "'a man of action, you will have all his actions in his consciousness--the only place where they immediately and intimately are.'" Comedy, however, depends upon incongruities between things as we see them and things as they are, between the character's view and the author's.<sup>18</sup> In spite of what she says about some incongruity inevitably emerging, she apparently does not think it sufficient for comedy. She does not entertain the possibility of comedy as a result of incongruities among the views of several consciousnesses.

The novel with which Sinclair is concerned in this essay is the "synthetic psychological novel" as distinguished from the "analytic psychological novel." The coincidence of her label with Richardson's emphasis upon the synthetic feminine consciousness that is both the matter and manner of feminine realism is significant. In the analytic psychological novel, the author analyzes the emotions and thoughts of his characters. In the synthetic psychological novel, the words are the emotions and thoughts of the characters, just as, in Imagist poetry, the image does not represent something else but is reality directly presented. Sinclair at this point indicates a strong preference for the synthetic psychological novel and considers the other kind a thing of the past.

She herself, however, continues to vacillate between the two kinds and modifications of both. Indeed, she often seems unaware of variations in method. The inner reality, the unity of consciousness, is her concern. If a work of literature communicates to her that





reality, that unity, she tends to assume that the method of the synthetic psychological novel has been used without looking closely to see if, in fact, it has. From her comments on Sinclair Lewis's Babbitt, for example, one might expect to find a method much like Richardson's Pilgrimage.<sup>19</sup> Actually Lewis's novel is closer to what Sinclair calls an analytic psychological novel. Although she constantly talks of method when referring to recent developments in the novel, she is closer to more recent commentators on stream of consciousness fiction who define it as a category identified by subject-matter and presented by a number of different methods.<sup>20</sup> Unlike them, however, she does not discriminate among these methods or observe the ways in which some of them may be combined with relatively traditional fictional structures. At the same time, she produces such combinations herself. Sinclair ultimately is more interested in the metaphysical implications of the new development in the psychological novel than she is in the technical variations associated with it.

Sinclair dramatizes the contrast between the analytic psychological novelist and the synthetic psychological novelist in her fiction. She creates several novelist-characters who are "realists." Her treatment of them represents a shift in Sinclair's own career as a novelist.<sup>21</sup> Some are mentioned only briefly; others are treated in more detail. By realist we find that she means the analytic psychological novelist who analyzes rather than presents directly the thoughts and emotions of his characters. We also find that this type of novelist, like the metaphysical realist, tends to leave out something essential. To a certain extent Sinclair admires the ruthless honesty and rigor of the realistic novelist's approach.



Liston Chamberlin's "relentless realism" in "Fame" (1920) is one example. Chamberlin remains obscure for most of his life because "he was brutal before brutality became the fashion." His readers are bothered most because "he got a sort of beauty out of it," and because his tone is austere and humorless.<sup>22</sup> When Sinclair's Tasker Jevons pursues his opportunistic career, however, brutality apparently is more fashionable. He consciously plans and painstakingly executes a shocking and disagreeable first novel that arrests the public's attention. The book, like Chamberlin's work, is described as "brutal."<sup>23</sup>

To understand precisely what Sinclair means by such brutality as well as to become aware of its possible metaphysical limitations, one must return to her first novel, Audrey Craven (1897). In this novel, Langley Wyndham looks upon people he meets as cases for study and transfers them with great accuracy into his books. He is a great believer in the method both Sinclair and Richardson ultimately question. "Wyndham had his intuitions," we are told, "but he was not the man to trust them as such; it was his habit to verify them by a subsequent logic. His literary conscience allowed nothing to take the place of the experimental method, the careful observation, and arranging of minute facts, intimate analytical study from the life. No action was too small, no emotion too insignificant, for his uncompromising realism" (AC 134). Audrey Craven's reaction to his London Legends is inarticulate but apparently negative. Wyndham, therefore, takes the liberty of telling her what she thinks of his book and, in doing so, reveals both his metaphysics and his aesthetics. She dislikes his book, he says, because it shows humanity bereft of ideals and motivated only by "'primitive passions.'" She does not realize that "'these





facts are the stuff of art, because they are the stuff of nature; that it takes multitudes of such facts, not just one or two picked out because of their 'moral beauty'--for you purists believe in the beauty of morality as well as in the immorality of beauty--to make up a faithful picture of life'" (AC 178). Superficially, Wyndham's intention to strip the human soul of all Puritan ideals sounds like the intention Sinclair admires in the Imagist poets. A very distinct difference exists, however, as the descriptions of Wyndham's writing of his next novel reveal.

Thus far in his career Wyndham has not been able to present the psychological reality of a woman because he has not had the opportunity to study one with sufficient detachment. He let his one opportunity slip when he fell in love with the object of his study. Audrey Craven, however, represents another chance. Neither love nor even friendship as he defines it enter into his intimacy with her. Moreover, she is exactly the type of woman he has wanted to examine, "the feminine creature artless in perpetual artifice, for ever revealing herself in a succession of disguises" (AC 138-9). His plan, the narrator says, is "to experimentalise in cold blood on the living nerve and brain tissue" (AC 140). Audrey, unaware of his method and flattered by his amazing ability to remember little comments she has made, falls in love with him.

When Wyndham wants to discover how Audrey responds to a conflict between her respect for tradition and her feelings, his method demands that he observe her in such a situation. He creates a conflict between her conventional morality and her love for him by inveighing against the duties involved in marriage and proclaiming his intention to retain



his freedom at all costs. Aware of the torment he causes her, he eases his conscience with the rhetoric of "God Almighty":

He told himself that his strictly impartial attitude as the student of human nature enabled him to do these things. He was as a higher intelligence, looking down on the crowd of struggling, suffering men and women beneath him, forgiving, tolerating all, because he understood all. He who saw life so whole, who knew the hidden motives and far-off causes of human action, could make allowances for everything. There was something divine in his literary charity. What matter, then, if he now and then looked into some girl's expressive face, and found out the secret she thought she was hiding so cleverly from everybody,--if he knew the sources of So-and-so's mysterious illness, which had puzzled the doctors so long? And what if he had obtained something more than a passing glimpse into the nature of the woman who had trusted him? It would have been base, impossible, in any other man, of course: the impersonal point of view, you see, made all the difference (AC 264-5).

The extent to which Wyndham exploits Audrey Craven for novelistic purposes is revealed by two events. His marriage to the woman he previously had loved reveals that his negative comments to Audrey about marriage primarily were designed to create the artificial situation that would expose her reactions. The appearance of An Idyll of Piccadilly, the novel based upon his study of Audrey, reveals her merely as an ignorant, vain, emotion-dominated composite of several different masculine influences upon her life. Wyndham's friends and acquaintances pity the suffering Audrey and deplore the method of her betrayer. They admire the form of his novel, but detect no imagination. Wyndham, a critic-friend points out, merely plagiarizes from the world around him. He takes an actual individual and makes her into a type rather than animates a type by endowing it with individual characteristics. Instead of using his experience to the extent that every novelist must in order to bring his character to life, he describes a unique situation to which he has access under false





pretenses. Wyndham's critic-friend concludes that if such dishonorable behavior is necessary, then realism in the novel had better cease (AC 287-291; cf 284, 250). Another of Wyndham's critics questions not so much the ethics of his method as the extent to which it is effective in tapping reality. Katherine Haviland admits that Audrey is, as Wyndham charges, a composite of external influences. She suggests, however, that what causes these influences to cohere is the real Audrey. Wyndham's study of her, however clever, never goes beneath the surface (AC 299).

Katherine's comment underscores other evidence in the novel that Wyndham's approach is flawed and incomplete. He ignores the self, the individual consciousness that is aware of itself as continuous and unified. He ignores the self, too, when he describes the novelist's role, when he refuses to examine and trust his inner resources, his intuition, his imagination, but insists upon reducing the novelist to an accurate transcriber of external events and people. Moreover, he wrongly thinks that he views his own reactions as detachedly as he views those of others. The narrator tells us that when the woman he loves refuses to marry him, Wyndham has a lapse in his self-knowledge; he persuades himself that the woman he cannot have has no value; moreover, if she has no value, neither have women in general. Women in literature rather than women in life become his preoccupation (AC 137-8). In this context, his study of Audrey Craven becomes undiagnosed revenge against women. Sinclair includes in her own more sympathetic novel about Audrey Craven, therefore, a rejection of an alternate way of presenting such a character. At this early point in her career, Sinclair merely has one of the other characters in the





novel assert that something holds all of the contradictory Audreys together. She herself has not found a way of dramatizing this unity.

In The Creators (1910) Sinclair presents another novelist who is a realist. Like Langley Wyndham, George Tanqueray insists upon the novelist's experience rather than inspiration as the matter of his art. Like Wyndham's works, Tanqueray's are characterized by, as one of the other characters puts it, "'brutal strength and cold, diabolical lucidity'" (C 70). Literature, he insists, must not be separated from life; people are the material with which the novelist works. He insists, however, that the novelist must do his utmost not to put himself in a position where other people continually make demands upon him. Unlike Wyndham, he trusts his intuitions and finds no need to verify them laboriously by prolonged contact with what or whom he portrays. All he needs for his work is a brief but penetrating glance or contact; all he needs is "the germ" of reality. He is certain that it is "only the little men that were the plagiarists of life; only the sterile imaginations that adopted the already born, and bargained with experience to do their work for them" (C 15-16).<sup>24</sup> In the same novel we watch Jane Holland conceive of her character, Hambleby, not from a close study of a suburban bank clerk, but from the merest idea in her head. What put the idea there in the first place never is clear, perhaps the briefest glimpse of such a person (C 112).

One possible outcome of the artist's trust in his inner resources, in his ability to create out of mere suggestions from the external world, is a greater belief in human potential in general and a more optimistic view of the human condition than is evident in the work of a novelist like Wyndham who reduces man to a plaything in the hands of



primitive forces over which he has no control. Like the novelist, Gladys Armstrong, in Audrey Craven, Jane Holland and George Tanqueray perhaps are among the "select but rapidly increasing band of thinkers" who disagree over details but are "unanimous in their fearless optimism" (AC 291). Jane Holland, for example, presents Hambleby's callowness but she also presents his "indestructible Decency." Tanqueray, too, combines tenderness with his brutal and forthright analyses of the minds of his characters. If Tanqueray offends, he does so not because he plagiarizes from life but because the characters he creates are so alive to him and so thoroughly understood by him that he has little time for actual people and little understanding of his relationships with them.

Sinclair, therefore, actually presents in her fiction two kinds of analytic psychological novelists who play the role of God Almighty and tell us their characters' thoughts and feelings. The first does not trust his intuition and imagination. Consequently, he does not create his characters but, instead, plagiarizes them from the external world. Refusing to recognize the centrality and inviolability of the individual consciousness or self, he presents his characters as products of elemental forces over which they have no control. The second kind of analytic psychological novelist in Sinclair's fiction does trust his own inner resources to create characters at the smallest suggestions from the external world. His trust in his own perception corresponds to a trust in a similar potential in all men, and to a tendency to present characters, whatever their failings, who have some unified sense of themselves. The first kind of analytic psychological novelist leaves out the self in his consideration of the artist's role and in the analyses





of his characters. The second views the individual consciousness, his own and that of his characters, as central.

The second kind of realistic novelist is the kind who would be most likely to try the synthetic psychological novel. The stronger his belief in the centrality of the individual consciousness, the less likely he is to approve the imposition of one consciousness, the artist's, upon another, the character's. The more likely he is to attempt to eliminate God Almighty altogether and to present directly his characters' thoughts and feelings. Unlike Richardson, Sinclair does not associate this tendency specifically with the woman novelist. It is true that when Tanqueray in The Creators accuses Jane Holland of becoming too involved and identifying too closely with her character, Hambleby, she does not agree or disagree; she merely encourages Tanqueray to develop his theory with brief, noncommittal questions. "'You've got to know Hambleby outside and inside, as God Almighty knows him,'" Tanqueray insists (C 124). Missing, apparently, from Jane's presentation of her character is the detached, outside view and perhaps the comic effect that results from the author's view of his character juxtaposed to the character's view of himself. Jane Holland possibly approaches the synthetic psychological novel. Sinclair's major concern, however, in the presentation of Jane Holland is her conflict between the traditional feminine role and her desire to write. Consequently, it is a male novelist-character, Christopher Vivart who, in Far End (1926), consciously undertakes the experiment.

Vivart, who tries his experiment in 1919, describes his aim as the elimination of "'God Almighty, the all-wise, all-seeing author.'" Just as Sinclair refers to Richardson as independently plunging into



the reality of the inner life, unaware of others doing the same thing, so Vivart is convinced that his experiment has not been tried before, at least not in the exact way or to the same extent. Identifying with his character, Peter Harden, as closely as Sinclair says Richardson identifies with Miriam Henderson, Vivart presents only what occurs, however vaguely or distortedly, in that character's consciousness (FE 81). Similarly, when his ability to present properly any characters other than Peter Harden is questioned, Vivart defends himself much as Sinclair defends Richardson's presentation of Miriam and the other characters in Pointed Roofs almost twenty years earlier. In both cases the basis of the defense is verisimilitude; in both cases the advantages and the limitations of the life of the individual consciousness form the basis of art.

In life, Vivart says, we know people only as they exist in our consciousnesses. We can do no more than imagine how another person's consciousness works, as Vivart does in the case of his character, Peter Harden. But because he imagines and presents Peter as "'a self, containing his own world,'" he can make him vivid and real to the reader. The other characters are, in turn, as vivid and real as other people in actual life, because they exist within the world of Peter's mind. In fact, any uncertainties about them make them seem more real than God Almighty's characters. "'It's presentation, not representation, all the time,'" Vivart says. "'There's nothing but the stream of Peter's consciousness. The book is a stream of consciousness, going on and on; it's life itself going on and on. I don't draw Peter feeling and thinking. Peter feels and thinks and his thoughts and feelings are the actual stuff of the book. No reflected stuff. I just turn out the





contents of Peter's mind'" (FE 82-3). Vivart's explanation is an obvious synthesis of Sinclair's essays on Imagist poetry and on tendencies in the modern novel.

As in the case of Sinclair's comments on Richardson, Vivart says that his approach is more difficult and likely to be less popular than that of the novelist who plays God Almighty.<sup>25</sup> The function of the artist in the writing of such a novel is, as Vivart sees it, first of all to imagine the consciousness of his single character. Secondly, he must select from among all the thoughts and feelings he could present directly, only those most characteristic. Thirdly, he must present them in a style appropriate to the character (FE 83). If he can work within these limitations, Vivart says, he will gain both unity and what Sinclair insists that Richardson achieves, reality (FE 84). Like Sinclair, Vivart fears that any attempt to present several consciousnesses might be made at the sacrifice of such unity (FE 85).

Just as Sinclair presents a male version of Mary Olivier in Arnold Waterlow: A Life (1924), so Vivart attempts a female version of Peter Harden in Anne Bywater: A Life. He has difficulty, Sinclair implies, imagining a feminine consciousness. More like Tanqueray, however, than like Wyndham, he trusts his imagination. The fact that he is successful underscores Sinclair's faith in the artist's inner resources as well as her refusal to admit to any distinct difference between the minds of the two sexes. Vivart's wife declares Anne "'absolutely right'" (FE 100). Audrey Templeton says, "'I wonder whether any novelist ever knew women as you know them. When I read it I had the sense of being Anne Bywater. I felt that you'd opened up my heart and spirit to me'" (FE 171). What the consciousnesses of men and women hold in common





and what both identify with in the presentation of Anne Bywater is the desire and the ability to perceive "'ultimate reality'" (FE 173). If a writer can capture that element in his presentation of a human consciousness, then his sex, the sex of his character, and the sex of his reader become irrelevant.

Sinclair's Mary Olivier appeared in 1919, one year after her essay on Richardson. Several critics briefly note Sinclair's sensitivity and accommodation to various contemporary movements in the arts and mention, among other influences, that of Richardson's feminine realism.<sup>26</sup> During her prolific career, Sinclair tries a number of fictional methods and combinations of methods, from an unobtrusive omniscient author to a Jamesian center of consciousness, to immersion, in a manner somewhat like Richardson's, in the consciousness of a single character. The latter method cannot be seen, however, as the discovery, after a long process of trial and error, of a form appropriate to her view of reality. In later novels she reintroduces more traditional elements or reverts entirely to her previous methods, identifying, no doubt, with the kind of analytic psychological novelist who views his own and his characters' consciousnesses as central rather than the kind who leaves out the self and simply plagiarizes from the external world. Apparently Sinclair does not think that only one novelistic form is the organic outgrowth of her metaphysical position. Her pervasive concern with the individual consciousness and its awareness of a stable reality can be communicated in a variety of ways.

Sinclair's experimentation suggests neither an attempt to compensate for lack of order and meaning in the inner life nor a search for order. She shares Richardson's fundamental optimism and certainty. Her



experimentation does suggest a balancing act performed on the fence between artistic integrity and the literary marketplace in which she had to earn her living. Her artist-characters frequently claim to be innovators, but Sinclair makes no such claims for her own work. Adaptable and eclectic, she consciously modifies the old and new forms which correspond in some way to her metaphysical position. She follows cautiously, however, and rarely is charged with obscurity or with outrageous defiance of literary tradition as are some of the writers in her fiction and a number of the writers she defends in her essays. She is more likely to court vilification for her critical treatment of traditional Christianity, for her then relatively frank treatment of sexual relationships in and out of marriage, and for her interest in various psychological aberrations and psychic phenomena than for her literary techniques.

In Mary Olivier Sinclair, like Richardson, focuses upon the life of a single female artist-character and presents it from within. Both women, when not quoting dialogue directly, vary the person of the pronoun with which they refer to their characters. Their variation takes slightly different directions and probably results from each author's attempt to achieve a sufficiently objective stance in relation to an essentially autobiographical character.<sup>27</sup> The variation does not seem to influence significantly the reader's relationship to the character or to suggest important differences in the character's relationship to her experience.<sup>28</sup>

Mary Olivier, like Pilgrimage, is a Künstlerroman. Both Mary and Miriam confront and reject certain traditional notions which run counter to the ecstatic moments during which they perceive reality; both struggle to communicate reality in various ways. Nevertheless,





Sinclair covers twice as many years of her character's life in a work about one-fifth as long. Moreover, Sinclair neatly divides that life into five clearly-dated sections: Infancy (1865-1869), Childhood (1869-1875), Adolescence (1875-1879), Maturity (1879-1900), and Middle Age (1900-1910). The titles of Richardson's thirteen sections give us no such information.<sup>29</sup> The implication of critics who note this difference is that Sinclair pays more attention than does Richardson to the demands of art. A much narrower principle of selection obviously is operative in Sinclair's treatment of her character. Sinclair credits Richardson with selectivity and is certain that a purpose exists behind everything she chooses to include and to omit. Nevertheless, Sinclair is less trusting than is Richardson. The latter presents many of Miriam's aberrations from what she herself finally concludes is most representative and assumes that her reader, like Miriam, can place her vacillations in the proper perspective. Sinclair presents only one major deviation from an essentially idealist position.

Mary Olivier, moreover, leads a much more circumscribed, much less independent life than Miriam Henderson. Her environment is not urban London. Mary Olivier is a novel concerned with social problems, especially that represented by the Victorian family, yet Mary does not come into contact with groups of people, like Miriam's Lycurgan socialists, who discuss such issues. The people she does encounter are less various. Never, until the end of the novel, is she free of her family. She neither lives away from home and attempts to support herself nor travels to the continent. Her life includes her family, two brief intervals away at school, various men friends who serve as real or imagined mentors in her intellectual life, her reading, her studies in metaphysics, her



music, and her writing. Externally uneventful as Miriam's life often seems, Mary's is even more so.

Sinclair apparently is not so convinced as is Richardson that the synthetic psychological novel must attempt to reproduce the cumulative effect of memory by involving in it both reader and character. Sinclair agrees that memory is cumulative (NI 231-2), but she is determined not to confuse it, in any form or according to any definition, with the self. Memory, Sinclair's comments imply, merely is the product of a person's circumstances. Like Richardson, Sinclair insists that a person is more than his circumstances. That an event occurred at some point in the past is less important than the fact that a specific person was involved in the event and remembers it (DI 40-3). More important than the existence of memory is the fact that it can be not only a part of consciousness but an object of consciousness. Richardson, in addition to presenting Miriam's reflections on memory, presents directly much of her remembering. Sinclair, more interested in presenting Mary's reflections, selects accordingly.

Mary's reflections take the form of metaphysical studies. These are as important in her artistic development as Miriam's observations and conclusions about ways people communicate and about their values are in hers. In fact, these aspects of the two novels reveal more about the developing aesthetics of the artist-characters than do the minimal references to actual works of art each produces. Mary expresses her conclusions, however, in the language of philosophical discourse. Sinclair's two books of philosophy, combined with the comments of several of her artist-characters with similar orientations, tell us much about the metaphysics behind many of the aesthetic statements of both Richardson and Sinclair.





D. The Metaphysics Behind a Feminine Aesthetics:  
May Sinclair and the New Idealism

"Natural things  
And spiritual,--who separates those two  
In art, in morals, or the social drift,  
Tears up the bond of nature and brings death,  
Paints futile pictures, writes unreal verse,  
Leads vulgar days, deals ignorantly with men,  
Is wrong, in short, at all points."

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Aurora Leigh (1859)

"'Don't brood too much,' she [Margaret] wrote to Helen, 'on the superiority of the unseen to the seen. It's true, but to brood on it is mediaeval. Our business is not to contrast the two, but to reconcile them.'"

E.M. Forster, Howard's End (1921)

Sinclair and Richardson in their essays and fiction, suggest that reality resides in the inner life of the individual consciousness that, in its responses to immediate, everyday surroundings, to "life in its own right at first hand," intuits an eternal dimension in the human experience. Neither Richardson nor Woolf, whose view of reality is in some respects similar, discusses this position systematically in the language of philosophical discourse. To them philosophy as a discipline apparently is the province of analytical male theorists like Mr. Ramsay in To the Lighthouse. When women writers branch out beyond the novel, Woolf envisions them writing "essays and criticism, . . . history and biography," but not philosophy.<sup>1</sup> Similarly the analysts, theorists, and systematizers in Pilgrimage are men, or women who have abdicated.

Sinclair, an amateur philosopher and the author of A Defence of Idealism (1917) and, more serious in tone and rigorous in method, The New Idealism (1922), obviously would not agree that philosophy in any formal sense and the feminine consciousness are antagonistic. She does





not dismiss the disciplined development and use of the intellect as peculiarly male. Moreover, if the male propensity to make and do can be utilized by the female artist in order to give tangible expression in art to the feminine consciousness, why may not the female metaphysician use similar means to serve similar ends? When the female artist expresses her values in art, she uses it to attack some of the distorted views of reality art has produced and perpetuated. Likewise, when the female philosopher writes philosophical discourse, she uses the intellect to attack some of the distorted views of reality the intellect has produced and perpetuated.<sup>2</sup> She encounters problems, of course, as Sinclair sometimes does, if she cannot find ways to assimilate her philosophical preoccupations in her art. Then characters become merely mouthpieces for ideas or oversimplified representatives of them.

For Sinclair, art and metaphysics, along with heroism and love, are parallel and frequently intersecting paths to the same reality (NI 314; cf DI 269).<sup>3</sup> Because the artist is most concerned with producing art, as Stephen Allingham, one of her artist-characters, points out, his philosophy of art may not be particularly original or well-articulated; nevertheless, he has one. Having a philosophy of art means having a metaphysics since the function of art is "'to disentangle the reality from the appearance and show it'" (A 157-8). According to this particular artist-character as well as to many of the others in Sinclair's fiction, art is the pursuit of beauty defined as eternal reality perceived through the appearances of the temporal world. Beauty, moreover, is inseparable from God. It "'exists in the mind of God, so that to see it is to come into communion with God, to be made one with him.



No theory of art is worth anything,'" Stephen Allingham adds, "'that doesn't take account of that'" (A 157-8).

In her books of philosophy and in her fiction as well, Sinclair takes extensive account of that. She preaches the metaphysics behind the feminine aesthetics that Richardson, of the three women writers in this study, most thoroughly practices. She agrees with Richardson that art, like society, needs an injection of feminine values which she defines as spiritual. "Art today," she says already in 1908 in a letter to Votes for Women, "is dying of the materialism of the nineteenth century, unnerved by that long period of spiritual torture, of paralysing doubt. It is dying for want of a religion, of a spiritual certainty." Women are the repositories of that certainty:

The "average sensual man" is right when he fears, above all things, scepticism in his women. His fear is the unconscious witness to the fact that the women's hands hold the spiritual destinies of the country. And as Art, next to Religion, is of all things the most dependent on spiritual certainties, its future also lies, at this moment, in the hands of the women. The Nineteenth Century was an age of material cock-sureness, and of spiritual doubt. The Twentieth Century will be the age of spiritual certainty.

And this thing, this desire of all the ages, this spiritual certainty will, I believe, come through the coming revolution, by the release of long captive forces, by the breathing in among us of the Spirit of Life, the genius of enfranchised womanhood.<sup>4</sup>

This emphasis upon women and women artists as repositories of spiritual certainty by no means implies a traditional Christian position. It implies, instead, a more general metaphysical position, a definition of ultimate reality.

Like Richardson and Woolf, Sinclair re-evaluates and redefines various terms that, unchallenged, perpetuate mistaken notions about reality. In fact, she begins her essay on Richardson by dismissing the neat distinctions "between idealism and realism, between subjective





and objective" that dominate nineteenth-century criticism. Such distinctions, she insists, have become increasingly imprecise. "Reality is thick and deep," she says, "too thick and too deep and at the same time too fluid to be cut with any convenient carving knife."<sup>5</sup> To get at this complexity Sinclair, who on the whole prefers the dilemmas inherent in idealism to those of realism, proposes a "new idealism." She concludes, as has Evelyn Underhill before her,<sup>6</sup> "that unity, in some form or other, is a necessity of thought" (DI 148). She has some difficulty finding a term flexible and comprehensive enough to describe this unity or reality. "Spirit," the term she chooses, is identified with the "unchanging self" (DI 64).

The self as a repository of unity is central to Sinclair's new idealism. She insists that the realists, who simultaneously deny their desire for unity and seek it in the wrong places, take serious note of it. Nevertheless, she also insists that the traditional idealists acknowledge the world of space and time that the realists so carefully describe. Indeed, the heightened moments of insight so frequently dramatized in the fiction of Sinclair, Richardson, and, to some extent Woolf, result from the interaction of the individual consciousness with the external world. Life fully lived in present time and space now and then reveals an eternal dimension.

Sinclair spends a good portion of both books of philosophy attempting, not always successfully, to define the positions of the old idealists, the new realists, and the new idealists.<sup>7</sup> She very much admires the realist philosophers among whom she includes thinkers as diverse as Samuel Butler, Henri Bergson, William James, Bertrand Russell, S. Alexander, and Alfred North Whitehead. She even wishes that someone would



persuade her to adopt their position; then she might be freed from what she calls "metaphysical care" (NI x). Her situation parallels that of a philosopher created by her novelist-character, Christopher Vivart, in Far End. In his search for a definition of ultimate reality, this philosopher switches his allegiance from the idealist to the realist position. Unlike Vivart's philosopher-character, however, Sinclair ultimately is not persuaded. Nor does she agree with Vivart's statement that all attempts to find common ground between realism and idealism are doomed to fail. Far End was published in 1926, four years after Sinclair's second book of philosophy, but the point in time at which Vivart makes his observation predates the War and thus Sinclair's own major philosophical efforts. Vivart, when he writes the novel on the philosopher's conversion, maintains his own neutrality on the subject. In 1919, however, when he writes the experimental novel that he describes much as Sinclair describes Richardson's work, his comments indicate a decided preference for the idealists' position. "'All our worlds are egocentric,'" he insists. "'You can't get beyond your own consciousness'" (FE 82). The movement of one of Sinclair's major artist-characters from a novel on metaphysics to an experimental novel in which the writer limits himself and his reader to the consciousness of a single character indicates her awareness of the close relationship between metaphysics and art as well as the possible relationship between the artist's definition of reality and his method.

A number of other artist-characters in Sinclair's fiction take positions similar to Vivart's. What they glimpse about the centrality of the individual consciousness one of Sinclair's other characters, a philosopher, experiences as a continual reality. Mr. Spalding in "The





Finding of the Absolute" (1923), dies and enters a kind of idealist's heaven where he and Kant discuss the differences and similarities between heaven and earth. Kant is gratified to find that everyone in heaven both refers to space and time as states of consciousness and creates his own. All of these states are coordinated with each other, as they are on earth, by means of a public system of measurement. The primary difference is that in heaven this system is recognized as arbitrary; no one believes in absolute space or time. Spalding tells Kant, however, that Einstein finally did prove public space and time to be relative. Kant notes, moreover, that in dreams men on earth create their own spaces and times as men do in heaven. When Spalding observes that we can enter into other people's states of mind in heaven while on earth they are closed to us, Kant points out that in telepathy and clairvoyance, men on earth do enter other people's states of consciousness (US 349-54). The differences between heaven and earth, in other words, are differences of degree. We glimpse through the temporal world the reality with which we are united in eternity.

Sinclair readily acknowledges that the new realists are justified in attacking traditional idealism if they identify it with solipsism or subjective idealism. The destruction of that position, she says, is relatively easy and not worth dwelling upon were the new realists not so ready to assume that they had destroyed all other idealist positions with the same arguments (DI 213). Sinclair insists that the new realists come to terms with idealists who either do not insist that the external world is entirely dependent for its existence upon the individual consciousness or who do not consider the issue to be of significance (DI 315-15; cf 175; NI 272-3). Her hypothetical idealistic monist says





to the realistic pluralist:

This multiplicity and change that you find in the universe I also find. There is not one sensible or intelligible fact in the whole collection to which I should refuse the name of reality, provided it be understood that not one of these is the Reality I am looking for. There is no sort of necessity to go out and look for multiplicity and change when you have got them all around you. I want to know what, if anything, lies behind or at the bottom of multiplicity and change . . . . I ask you how there can be multiplicity without something that multiplies itself, or change without something that persists throughout change . . . . without the unchanging One, the many and the changing cannot be (DI 306).

Sinclair objects primarily to the realists' reduction of the self or individual consciousness to the role of passive spectator (DI 180, 216; NI 28). As "casual looker-on" the self does not create but merely discovers reality; it does not create but merely perceives relationships (NI 29). Consciousness is reduced to "a pure, featureless transparency let down between subject and object," and everything of interest and importance is credited to the object (NI 31-2). According to the new realist, objects have an effect upon consciousness, but consciousness has no effect upon itself (NI 33). The new realists' major threat to the idealists' position is inherent in this denial. She asks the realists, therefore, to consider a distinction between primary and secondary consciousness. Their doing so, she thinks, will resolve many of the disagreements between idealists and realists who at present talk about one kind of consciousness when they mean the other (NI 274).

Primary consciousness she defines as the contents of the mind apart from reflection. It is "the whole block immediately present in consciousness, before reflection, or judgment, or any sort of secondary awareness has got to work on it." Primary consciousness includes, therefore, "all the objects and events and relations and conditions which are immediately present in it, whether perceived or conceived, remembered,



anticipated or willed. It thus includes space and time, motion and all the other categories, all the empirical qualities of matter, all empirical quantities and intensities, all sensa, all percepts and concepts, all acts of will, all feelings, passions and emotions, when and as experienced, and all the raw material of judgment and reasoning" (NI 274-5). The realists, Sinclair insists, make the mistake of assuming that only objects in the external world can give to consciousness any objective content. She notes that, on the contrary, consciousness can be conscious of itself. The mind can work on the primary content and make that its object. This characteristic, which Sinclair calls secondary consciousness, includes "observation, reflection and meditation; judgment, inference, and every form of reasoning, syllogistic or empirical; believing, disbelieving and opining; imagining." Instead of merely "being conscious," it is, in its highest manifestations, "knowing." It is, therefore, the province of all error as well as all truth (NI 290-1).

Sinclair makes a further distinction, however, one to which she is certain the realists will object. Secondary consciousness is dependent upon primary consciousness, she notes, but both are dependent upon what she calls "ultimate consciousness." Ultimate consciousness, she admits, merely is another way of referring to God (NI 296). This very general concept of God, however, is an outgrowth of her flexible and inclusive idea of Spirit, not of the traditional Christian God whom she and a number of her fictional characters reject. The concept is closer to the God of Pantheism to whom she and several of her characters are attracted but about whom they remain ethically in doubt (NI 304-8). Sinclair counters the realists' certain objection to her "dragging in of God" (NI 297) by insisting that, while realism is justified to some extent





when it denies "the human subjectivity of experience," it is not justified when it denies "the spiritual nature of reality" (NI 300). To do so is to ignore those intense moments practically everyone experiences during which they perceive the spiritual dimension of the human experience. Richardson's Miriam, too, ultimately defines such moments as "God." Rapturously observing an outdoor scene in Dimple Hill, she exclaims, "'I have seen the smile of God. Sly smile.'"<sup>8</sup>

In her fiction Sinclair rings numerous variations upon idealism and realism and all that we associate with the two terms. "Idealism" is a pejorative label when the individual consciousness accepts as ultimate reality traditional ideals or creates its own without acknowledging the external world of space and time, without checking those ideals against it, and without looking to it and through it for ultimate reality. The Christian ideal of another world and the corresponding deprecation of the temporal world and the mortal body hampers a number of Sinclair's characters. So do related abstractions like the ideal of behaving beautifully that governs Harriet Freen's life and death, the notion of honor that governs the renunciation of Anthony Waring in Sinclair's last novel, and the ideal of filial devotion and duty that restricts the lives of so many of her characters, male and female. Idealism is a positive term in Sinclair's fiction only when it implies the new idealism that puts the individual consciousness first, but perceives and communes with the spiritual dimension in the temporal world, eternity through time, spirit through flesh. Otherwise, as Ted Haviland in Audrey Craven says, "'when people call you an idealist, it's a polite way of saying you're a failure'" (AC 42). Or, as Dick Verall says in "A Hero of Fiction" (1898), an "'I'dealist'" is an egoist, "'an insufferable bore,'"<sup>9</sup>



the phrase Mrs. Ramsay later uses to describe the I-saying Tansley in Woolf's To the Lighthouse.

"Realism" or "reality" appear in Sinclair's fiction with corresponding if not greater equivocalness. What Sinclair calls realism in metaphysics is not what she praises as the presentation of reality in art. The latter is a product not of realism but of the new idealism that acknowledges but sees through the temporal world with which the realists stop. The emphasis is not on what is perceived, but on perception. Nevertheless Sinclair and her characters often refer to the temporal world as reality. In these instances, the meaning of the word is close to that of metaphysical realism and usually is opposed to an ideal or dream which is one of the misguided, purely mental abstractions Sinclair questions. Characters who define the world as an opposition between dream and reality create a false dichotomy. Occasionally Sinclair uses "actuality" or "the actual" in place of reality in this sense. On the whole, however, she seems to think that the term is not sufficiently positive in its connotations. Jewdwine's denunciations of "'the fugitive actuality'" in The Divine Fire, for instance, do not suggest that the temporal world is a vehicle for ultimate reality. For this reason, perhaps, Sinclair often uses reality to refer both to ultimate reality and to temporal reality, trusting in the context to communicate the distinction.

The reference to The Divine Fire suggests the ideal most debilitating to the artist next to the idealization of Art. It is the idealization of the past and the corresponding denigration of the modern world. Keith Rickman, the poet in The Divine Fire, as well as several of Sinclair's other artist-characters, initially imitate traditional art forms and





adopt traditional subjects and themes because they believe that the modern world, in its ugliness, cannot inspire great art. What is ugly in the modern world, as Stephen Allingham, the poet in The Allinghams, and Owen Prothero, the poet in The Creators, discover, is essentially unreal. They come to accept, even to delight in the immediate present and to perceive the spiritual element inherent in contemporary existence. Richardson's Miriam and, to some extent, Woolf's Orlando develop in the same direction.

Mary Olivier, like most of Sinclair's artist-characters, cannot be considered apart from her metaphysical preoccupations. She follows a course of study, in fact, similar to the one evident in Sinclair's books on philosophy. She directs much of her intellectual activity toward challenging the traditional Christianity that seems to have no relationship to her experience. What she searches for in her reading is a metaphysics that accounts for the ecstatic moments she, like Richardson's Miriam, intuitively is glimpses of ultimate reality. Already in her childhood, she divides her life into two parts, "here" versus "there." On one side is everything she cares about, all the people, animals, activities, and joyous moments that are real and important to her. On the other side is a contradictory and contentious God who imposes duties upon her and who yet seems irrelevant. The direction of Mary's intellectual pilgrimage is, like that of Richardson's Miriam, toward an idea of God that can be reconciled with her sense of reality. She is not only concerned, as is Miriam, with accepting her sudden, happy moments as most real and then describing them, but also with explaining them in the context of philosophical thought.

Mary's moments of happiness come to her in various ways throughout





her life. They come at first unexpectedly, unaccountably, sometimes triggered by various sights and sounds, sometimes even in the midst of trouble. She begins, moreover, to discover that they are shared by other people and expressed in literature and other writings that she finds in her father's library. Like Richardson's Miriam, she finds the people she encounters in books more real than those she meets. In their books she finds the best instead of the worst of Plato, Spinoza, and Shelley. They, too, experience moments of sudden happiness and associate them with beauty; moreover, they express those moments beautifully (MO 130-1, 134). Unaccountable and various as such experiences are, they represent to Mary something stable and real. Her early ecstatic feelings, however, do not last. After a long lapse, they eventually mellow into a calm, happy certainty of contact with an enduring truth (MO 311-12, 367, 375). A middle-aged woman, she sums up the part such moments have played in her life. Her happiness "had come to her when she was a child in brilliant, clear flashes; it had come again and again in her adolescence, with more brilliant and clearer flashes; then, after leaving her for twenty-three years, it had come like this--streaming in and out of her till its ebb and flow were the rhythm of her life" (MO 377). To understand the gap during which Mary does not experience her sudden happiness, one must understand more about her metaphysical studies.

Mary's early experience of ecstatic moments, combined with her discovery that other people both experience and express them, lead her to explore other notions of God that are less austere than the traditional Christian notions. In various reference works, she discovers gods more closely related to the experiences she considers real and important, gods who are quarrelsome but less ready to hate, who appreciate nature, art,



and fun, and who are more honest and less demanding in their relationships with men (MO 78-9). Mary is attracted particularly to pantheism, the view that "'all things are God,'" because it seems to explain the moments of happiness she experiences (MO 98, 100).

She is very much alone, however, in her metaphysical quest. Before her is the example of her Aunt Lavinia, whose religious opinions, friends, and acquaintances have been scrutinized and judged unsuitable by the Olivier brothers (MO 106, 221). In this climate of disapproval and coercion, Mary is forced to study the Thirty-Nine Articles and to prepare herself for confirmation. She feels as though she sits in a room

full of wool; wool flying about; hanging in the air and choking you. Clogging your mind. Old grey wool out of pew cushions that people had sat on for centuries, full of dirt.

Wool, spun out, wound round you, woven in a net. You were tangled and strangled in a net of unclean wool. They caught you in it when you were a baby a month old . . . . You would have to cut and tug and kick and fight your way out. They were caught in it themselves, they couldn't get out. They didn't want to get out. The wool stopped their minds working. They hated it when their minds worked, when anybody's mind worked (MO 113).

Mary, much like Joyce's Stephen, must fly by such nets as family and traditional religious belief. She does not leave home, but she does refuse to be confirmed, and she does voice her resentment of the vows her parents made in her behalf when she was too young to have any say in the matter (MO 112). Her rebellion manifests itself largely in negative ways. She cannot imagine explaining to her mother what she believes. Moreover, difficulties inherent in pantheism, like accounting for evil, make her hesitate to declare her belief (MO 143-4).

Mary's interest in metaphysics inevitably involves her in the realist-idealist controversy. When she ponders, already in adolescence,





whether the world is "in your mind or your mind in the world," the thought occurs to her that "God's mind is what both go on in" (MO 137). More than anything she wants to define "'Reality, Substance, the Thing-in-itself.'" To this end she reads numerous philosophers who cause her to consider various definitions of reality. Spinoza calls it God (MO 243). Kant cheats her by never telling her what it is. Schopenhauer is more satisfying with his idea of perceiving reality or God through beautiful things (MO 254). The Upanishads provide easy answers unsatisfying to a robust, healthy intellect (MO 277). Hegel finally does what Mary had wanted Spinoza and then Kant to do. He says that "thought was the Thing-in-itself" (MO 278).

At this most idealistic point in her intellectual development Mary encounters variants of the realist position in several writers on evolution and heredity. Reading them, she realizes that she has not given sufficient consideration to the external world. Instead she has "spent most of her time in the passionate pursuit of things under the form of eternity, regardless of their actual behaviour in time" (MO 289). She swings, therefore, from a conviction in the supremacy of the individual consciousness to a conviction in the supremacy of temporal forces she had considered external and destructible.

Ultimately, however, she achieves the intermediate position of the new idealist. Observing that evolution and heredity allow room for much individual variation (MO 290-1, 294, 375), she reaches the position Sinclair takes in A Defence of Idealism when she affirms the individual over the race. "The race," she insists much like Richardson's Miriam, "is nothing but the sum of the individuals that compose and have composed it, and will compose it." She adds that "the Individual is not his



heritage. His heritage is his" (DI 36-7). Mary Olivier decides that the most important part of herself, the part that is free of heredity, includes her moments of happiness (MO 311-12). Increasingly she associates them with reality, and reality with God (MO 373, 378). Traditional Christianity's insistence upon the separation of man from God, she sees, is an illusion. So is the image of a "meek and mild" Christ. Mary sees Christ as a rebel who tried to tell people that "their hidden self was God. It was their Saviour. Its existence was the hushed secret of the world" (MO 319-20).

The idea that man and God are separate is the result of attaching primary importance to other people and to things outside oneself. Mary concludes that even her metaphysical struggles have not prevented her from falling into this trap and from losing touch with reality for a large portion of her life. Her happiest moments, she decides, came not from people or things but from within herself (MO 378-9). Her final metaphysical position, then, is not to deny the various ways in which people are determined. At the same time she refuses to deny the even more fundamental "certainty of freedom." Moreover, "the flash point of freedom was your consciousness of God" (MO 377). That consciousness, once attained, cannot be lost (MO 379). Mary, then, acknowledges the temporal world but reaffirms the centrality of the individual consciousness which perceives its spiritual dimension.

As in the case of Richardson's Miriam, Sinclair's Mary develops simultaneously on several levels. At the same time that she rebels against traditional Christianity and against the inadequate definitions of reality she encounters in her metaphysical studies, she, like Miriam, is engaged in attempts to develop positive alternatives by means of her





art. If she cannot find anyone to tell about her metaphysical beliefs, she can at least try to communicate what is most real in other ways. Her primary medium is poetry. At a very early age she is attracted to poetry, to sections of Shakespeare, Milton, and Pope. Trying to write lines in imitation of theirs, she finds that making rhymed lines is easier than making unrhymed ones, just as Sinclair finds that following traditional novel forms is easier than abandoning them and trying to present reality directly. Mary enjoys writing poetry so much that, in the context of her mother's austere religious teachings, she thinks it must be sinful (MO 77).

Like Richardson's Miriam, Mary finds herself under the influence of a long tradition. As an adolescent she turns from attempts to imitate the poets she admires to attempts to make her own poems out of images that impress her. Her problem at this point is uniting visual and aural, finding a rhythmic arrangement of words that suits the arrangement of images (MO 125). Part of her problem, she realizes, is that the patterns of images and sounds formed by other writers still influence her. The sound patterns of the Greek language attract her (MO 125). Moreover, she has read a great deal of Byron and Shelly:

"The pale pearl-purple evening--" The words rushed together. She couldn't tell whether they were her own or somebody else's.

There was the queer shock of recognition that came with your own real things. It wasn't remembering though it felt like it.

Shelley--"the pale purple even." Not pearl-purple. Pearl-purple was what you saw. The sky to the east after sunset above Greffington Edge. Take out "pale," and "pearl-purple evening" was your own (MO 234).

Mary learns by such a process to insist upon her own vision and upon her own way of expressing it.

Like Keith Rickman in Sinclair's earlier novel, The Divine Fire,





Mary is attracted to the idea of modern drama written in blank verse. She is worried, however, by the fact that people do not speak in such a manner and, at the time, is unable to think of a solution. Nevertheless, her "Dream-Play" continues to form in her mind and its formation makes her happy enough to bear even the monotony of life with her mother (MO 298-9). Mary's doubts about her drama are part of a search for an appropriate form for her vision, a search that is considered only briefly in the novel. As in the case of Miriam in Pilgrimage, translation plays an important role in this search. The major step forward that Mary takes in her attempt to suit manner to matter is her translation of Euripides after the manner of Whitman. To do so she must reject much of poetic tradition.

The Bacchae. You could do it after you had read Walt Whitman. If you gave up the superstition of singing; the little tunes of rhyme. If you left off that eternal jingling and listened, you could hear what it ought to be.

Something between talking and singing. If you wrote verse that could be chanted; that could be whispered, shouted, screamed as they moved. Agave and her Maenads. Verse that would go with a throbbing beat, excited, exciting; beyond rhyme. That would be nearest to the Greek verse (MO 326).

Mary's translation is an important innovation. Richard Nicholson, a classical scholar who has written a book on Euripides, is amazed to find someone who has translated the Bacchae according to the very principles he advocates. He is instrumental in getting Mary's translation published and writes the introduction. Because he wants her to be recognized as "'a poet translating; not the other way on'" (MO 339), he also is instrumental in getting a small volume of her poetry published.

Sinclair's metaphysical statements explain systematically what Richardson means by the "life in its own right at first hand" that is the province of the feminine realist. Her fiction provides parallel



attempts to communicate reality directly by limiting us to a single consciousness as in Mary Olivier. Many of her characters, like Mary Olivier, also participate in metaphysical discussion, often in relation to art. In one of her essays Sinclair says, "It is in rendering psychological states, in presenting unaltered and unabridged the truth of ordinary reality, that the modern poet most shows his modernity; in sticking, that is to say, close to consciousness."<sup>10</sup> The same, as Sinclair's essays on the novel show, might be said of the modern novelist. To both, reality is not an abstract spiritual world created by the consciousness alone. On the other hand, "existence is not life, any more than fact is truth."<sup>11</sup> Reality is not the external world independent of consciousness either. If one distinguishes among primary, secondary, and ultimate consciousness, Sinclair thinks, both the self and the world of space and time can be accounted for. What the realists emphasize in addition to the external world is primary consciousness, the immediate contents of the mind apart from reflection. Sinclair emphasizes and insists upon the existence of secondary consciousness, the mind's ability to reflect upon and reason about its own contents. What the secondary consciousness comes to know is the spiritual nature of reality, the possibility of communion in and through the temporal world with a metaphysical principle Sinclair calls ultimate consciousness or God. The artist's function is to reveal the unity and the beauty that he perceives through the multiplicity and sometimes the ugliness of the modern world.

Just as Richardson ultimately does not limit the practice of feminine realism to women, so Sinclair does not exclude men from the attainment of the new idealist metaphysical position. In fact, to label her





metaphysics "feminine" really is valid only in the context of this study. Except for the letter to Votes for Women quoted at the beginning of this chapter and a few other instances, she all but excludes sex from her discussions of metaphysics and from her presentation of metaphysical quests in her fiction. In the total body of her fiction, Sinclair's male and female characters, equally likely to possess intellectual abilities as well as limitations, are equally likely to be attracted by either realism or idealism. They confront similar experiences, problems, and alternatives when they embark upon their quests for reality. The serious seekers, regardless of sex, usually make some progress toward a reconciliation of the two positions. In fact, the course of metaphysical study evident in Sinclair's two books of philosophy is reflected not only in Mary Olivier's development but also in Arnold Waterlow's. Sinclair, more consistently than either Richardson or Woolf, emphasizes and dramatizes the common metaphysical ground whereon men and women meet. More consistently, too, her work is marked, if not by consistently high quality, at least by a lack of angry or smug sex-consciousness as well as by a concern with the human condition in general, two characteristics Woolf hopes the female artist will attain.



E. Theory and Practice:  
Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson

". . . to [Marlow] the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine."

Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness (1902)

Woolf notes in her essays that the restrictions placed upon female artists affect them in dangerous ways. Some women accept the idea that they lack intellect and artistic ability and content themselves with tasteless and naively-egotistical self-expression.<sup>1</sup> In "Women and Fiction," Woolf looks forward to the time when changes in women's role in society inevitably will result in a corresponding shift in their art from everyday details and personal relationships to an interest in questions about the human condition in general. At this point the novel will become for women, not merely "the dumping-ground for the personal emotions" but "an art to be studied," and women will branch out into other forms of writing as well (CE II 147-8).<sup>2</sup>

Other women do not accept the view that they are intellectually and aesthetically inept. They respond to such charges with anger and bitterness. Either they consider themselves superior and write in a defensively feminine manner or they prove their equality by imitating, with a vengeance, the thought and expression of men. In both cases, self-consciousness flaws their art. Like Americans, women writers "are conscious of their own peculiarities . . . ; apt to suspect insolence, quick to avenge grievances, eager to shape an art of their own" (CE II 113). Such suspicions, desires for revenge, and enthusiasms



are extraneous to art. Woolf cites many instances of female writers whose work is marred by anger and bitterness. Among them are Olive Schreiner,<sup>3</sup> Lady Winchilsea (AROO 88), the Duchess of Newcastle (AROO 92), and Charlotte Brontë (AROO 104). On the other hand, she compliments Jane Austen and Dorothy Osborne because they write as women without the debilitating consciousness that they are doing so (AROO 93, 101). On the whole, Woolf thinks that the female artist slowly is achieving the detachment necessary for the production of significant art (CE II 145). She slowly is approaching Woolf's ideal of androgeneity, creating as a total person, using both the masculine and the feminine faculties that every artist possesses (AROO 147-9).

Like Sinclair, Woolf was familiar with the early volumes of Richardson's Pilgrimage. Sinclair's review of Pointed Roofs appeared in 1918. Woolf may have been familiar with it when she reviewed the fourth part, The Tunnel, in 1919 and the seventh, Revolving Lights, in 1923. These reviews cannot be dismissed lightly.<sup>4</sup> They provide a worthwhile basis for determining some of the similarities and differences between the art of Richardson and Woolf as well as between their treatments of the female artist. In her published criticism, Woolf treats Richardson kindly on the whole; yet privately she classifies her with the female artists who angrily and self-consciously try to produce a feminine art. Richardson, she thinks, lacks the detachment of the artist. The "damned egotistical self," she says in a diary entry in 1920, "ruins Joyce and Richardson to my mind" and makes them too "narrow and restricting" (WD 23). Her remark perhaps explains the comment in the review of Revolving Lights that Miriam "points too didactically" to small things that interest her (CW 125). Conversely Richardson, who alludes to





Woolf publicly only in the 1938 Foreword to Pilgrimage, describes her in private letters as essentially a masculine writer who, in her attempts to deal with life, is off-base. Richardson's response is to the despair she senses in Woolf's last book, presumably Between the Acts.<sup>5</sup> To a certain extent, therefore, each woman defined her work in opposition to that of the other.

Nevertheless, marked similarities exist in their aesthetic theories, if not in their aesthetic practice. Woolf's reading and reviewing of The Tunnel and Revolving Lights occurred during the years when she turned from the relatively traditional form of her first two novels to her more experimental methods. Moreover, these reviews read like early versions of her much-quoted essays on fiction, "Modern Fiction" and "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown." The ideas developed in these essays are not merely responses to Richardson's artistic method. They also are paraphrases and amplifications of ideas Richardson's developing artist-character, Miriam Henderson, encounters or advances in the two sections of Pilgrimage that Woolf reviewed. Probably Woolf read more of Pilgrimage than these two sections. But even if she did not, she found in what she read the bases both for many of her comments on fiction and for many of the themes of her own novels.

The Tunnel and Revolving Lights, like most of the other sections of Pilgrimage, are filled with Miriam's observations on and impatience with woman's traditional role as well as with some of the modern alternatives. They contain evidence of her impatience with distorting and incomplete male intellectuality and with life as recorded by male writers and artists. These two sections also contain Miriam's observations on "woman's art," the art of life. They include some of her own



struggles to express herself in ways that communicate the reality most of the writers and artists she encounters leave out. Emerging now and then, too, are hints of Miriam's androgeneity. Most of the reverberations between such passages and Woolf's work should be obvious to anyone familiar with her work and her theories. Whether she took ideas from Richardson or merely found in her work the expression of what she herself thought and felt is impossible to determine and, in the final analysis, irrelevant. More important is the marked similarity of their views on the novel in theory, their divergence in practice, the metaphysical differences accounting for the divergence, and the implications of such similarities and differences for their views of the female artist.

In her 1919 review of The Tunnel, Woolf says that Richardson's method "demands attention, as a door whose handle we wrench ineffectively calls our attention to the fact that it is locked." Nevertheless, like Sinclair, she defends Richardson's choice of method and recognizes that it is the product of a realization that traditional forms are inappropriate for the material she wants to present. Woolf cites two brief comments from The Tunnel as clues to Richardson's method, Hypo Wilson's prediction that "'him and her'" will be eliminated from the novel and Miriam's remark that "'to write books knowing all about style would be to become like a man.'" Appropriately, Woolf notes, in the work containing these remarks,

"him and her" are cut out, and with them goes the old deliberate business: the chapters that lead up and the chapters that lead down; the characters who are always characteristic; the scenes that are passionate and the scenes that are humorous; the elaborate construction of reality; the conception that shapes and surrounds the whole. All these things are cast away, and there is left, denuded, unsheltered, unbegun and





unfinished, the consciousness of Miriam Henderson, the small sensitive lump of matter, half transparent and half opaque, which endlessly reflects and distorts the variegated procession, and is, we are bidden to believe, the source beneath the surface, the very oyster within the shell.

The critic is thus absolved from the necessity of picking out the themes of the story. The reader is not provided with a story; he is invited to embed himself in Miriam Henderson's consciousness, to register one after another, and one on top of another, words, cries, shouts, notes of a violin, fragments of lectures, to follow these impressions as they flicker through Miriam's mind, waking incongruously other thoughts, and plaiting incessantly the many-coloured and innumerable threads of life (CW 120-1).

Woolf praises Richardson, as Sinclair does, for presenting reality more vividly and directly than she could have, had she used traditional methods (CW 121).

In her 1923 review of Revolving Lights, Woolf credits Richardson with consciously developing, if not inventing, "the psychological sentence of the feminine gender." More flexible and sensitive than the masculine sentence, it enables Richardson to present honestly "states of being" rather than "states of doing." Miriam, Woolf says,

is aware of "life itself"; of the atmosphere of the table rather than of the table; of the silence rather than of the sound. Therefore she adds an element to her perception of things which has not been noticed before, or, if noticed, has been guiltily suppressed. A man might fall dead at her feet (it is not likely), and Miriam might feel that a violet-coloured ray of light was an important element in her consciousness of the tragedy. If she felt it, she would say it. Therefore, in reading Revolving Lights we are often made uncomfortable by feeling that the accent upon the emotions has shifted. What was emphatic is smoothed away. What was important to Maggie Tulliver no longer matters to Miriam Henderson (CW 125).

Woolf recognizes that reality as Richardson defines it is not simply a matter of external facts and events. Rather it is a matter of the individual consciousness responding to, distorting, even ignoring facts and events. Even more frequently, it is a matter of the individual consciousness registering and interpreting cues from the outer world,



like atmospheres and silences, not usually included in novels. Woolf perceives in Richardson's work a significant shift in values, from outer to inner, from emphatic to subtle. With the shift in values has gone a shift in characterization. And a more sensitive stylistic instrument, a more flexible sentence, has become necessary.

Woolf's comments on Richardson are related closely to her comments on the female artist in general. Noting in an essay entitled "Men and Women" that the energy of women has to some extent been liberated, she also notes that we do not know as yet "into what forms [it is] to flow." Women must try the artistic forms that exist, accept what is suitable, discard what is not, and develop more appropriate forms of their own.<sup>6</sup> She praises Lady Ritchie for not submitting to the tradition of Thackeray, her father, and for trusting her own instincts.<sup>7</sup> Woolf agrees with R. Brimley Johnson that women's novels usually can be distinguished from men's; the novelist is dependent to a certain extent upon his or her own experience, and the experiences of the sexes, at least at present, are extremely different (CW 26). The female artist who trusts her own instincts rather than tradition will reveal herself in several ways, by her handling of characterization, by her implicit value system, by her sentences, and by the overall structure of her book.

Woolf is interested in, although somewhat ambivalent about, the female novelist's proverbial inability to create a credible hero and the male novelist's similar inability to create a credible heroine. She is also interested in the female novelist's portrayal of women. Discussing the female writer's male characters, she decides that possibly women were attracted to the novel because it gave them a chance





to criticize men. Since, however, women see men in a way that men cannot see themselves, such motives are not necessarily reprehensible (CW 26-7). Only when women writers give vent to anger and bitterness in their characterizations of men instead of maintaining a sense of humor, do they endanger their art (AROO 136). Woolf also has some reservations about male novelists' presentation of women. Male writers often represent women, she says, as "men in disguise" or as "what men would like to be, or are conscious of not being; or again they embody that dissatisfaction and despair which affect most people when they reflect upon the sorry condition of the human race." Both men and women, she concludes, have the tendency to embody in someone of the opposite sex everything that is lacking in themselves, everything that they desire or despise. Such a tendency often does little to contribute to understanding between the sexes.<sup>8</sup>

An understanding of women could be assisted, Woolf thinks, by female novelists willing to reveal honestly what they find in their own souls and to record the obscure lives of members of their own sex. Thus far novelists have presented women only in their relationships to men. Men who see women only in that capacity know very little about them and usually classify them according to stereotyped extremes of good and evil. Think how limited literature would be, she says, if men were "only represented . . . as the lovers of women, and were never the friends of men, soldiers, thinkers, dreamers" (AROO 124-5). Women have yet to be presented with a similar complexity.

The woman writer who trusts her intuition not only will present honestly the experiences of her own sex but also will reflect feminine values. Repeatedly, Woolf observes that women value what men devalue





and that both content and form in their art differ correspondingly (CW 26-7). In A Room of One's Own, she insists that the female writer must have the courage to oppose her own values to the male values that dominate both life and art (AROO 110-11). In "Women and Fiction," she observes that women writers increasingly seem willing to accept criticism for such courage. She finds evidence that they are beginning to respect their own views of the world, which means less strictly autobiographical writing and more interest in the experiences of women in general, both those leading traditional lives and those seeking alternatives in a society now more willing to offer them (CE II 146).

If women are to reflect their own values and write in a manner neither self-consciously feminine nor imitatively masculine, then some undoubtedly will evolve new artistic forms. Woolf deals with the feminine sentence elsewhere than in her review of Richardson's work. The traditional sentence patterns that men have developed do not suit women's writing, she says in "Women and Fiction." Men's sentences are "too loose, too heavy, too pompous for a woman's use." A woman's sentence must take "the natural shape of her thought without crushing or distorting it" (CE II 145). In A Room of One's Own, Woolf again stresses the need for a feminine sentence. Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot struggled unsuccessfully with men's sentences. Jane Austen, in contrast, ultimately communicates more because she creates sentence forms appropriate to her purposes (AROO 115). Austen's sentence, however, can be associated with Richardson's only in a very general sense. Both women write honestly about their experiences as women and devise sentences which most accurately reflect those experiences. The feminine sentence in general presumably is a more flexible and sensitive tool



than is the sentence devised by men; but it also is a very individualized tool. It is Jane Austen's sentence, Dorothy Richardson's sentence, and so on.<sup>9</sup> Adaptability to the individual female writer's vision is its predominant characteristic.

Just as the sentence was devised by men, so, too, were the structures into which sentences were put. Fortunately, in the novel, these structures are less rigid than they are in some other genres. Women have had more chances to create shapes that allow for the expression of the poetry within them. Woolf speculates that women's books eventually will be adapted to women's bodies, "shorter, more concentrated, than those of men, and framed so that they do not need long hours of steady and uninterrupted work" (AR00 117). At first glance, she seems to have accepted one of the negative stereotypes of women: flightiness, lack of staying power. In the context of her well-known comments on the novel, however, her insistence upon brevity and concentration is seen instead as part of her desire for the selectivity and suggestiveness of poetry.

Woolf's comments on Richardson and on the female artist in general are related closely to the two well-known essays upon which she was working concurrently with her reading of Richardson. Two months after her review of The Tunnel, Woolf published in the Times Literary Supplement, the same periodical as the review, an unsigned essay entitled "Modern Novels." This essay was revised and published in The Common Reader as "Modern Fiction" in 1925. Seven months after her review of Revolving Lights, Woolf published in The Nation and Athenaeum, again the same periodical as her review, an early, shorter version of "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown." This essay was rewritten and delivered as a





lecture in May, 1924.<sup>10</sup>

In "Modern Fiction," Woolf labels Wells, Bennett, and Galsworthy materialists who consider the physical but not the spiritual dimension of the human experience. The fictional structures they create are, as a result, lifeless (CE II 104-5). If we "look within" we find that life is quite different from what these men present. Woolf's endlessly-quoted recommendation must be quoted again so that its relationship to her reviews of Richardson and to Richardson's theories is clear:

Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions--trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came not here but there; so that, if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, . . . . Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? We are not pleading merely for courage and sincerity; we are suggesting that the proper stuff of fiction is a little other than custom would have us believe it (CE II 106).

Woolf singles out from among a number of young writers who attempt to convey this "proper stuff of fiction," not Richardson but Joyce. He seems to her to follow the injunction to "record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, [to]...trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness" (CE II 107). He seems to perceive, moreover, that the traditionally unimportant may be more real than the traditionally great.



In "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" Woolf again attacks the values and methods of Wells, Bennett, and Galsworthy. Going to them for instruction on the creation of real characters, she says, "is precisely like going to a bootmaker and asking him to teach you how to make a watch" (CE I 326). Whether or not these men are aware of it, she adds, "on or about December 1910 human character changed" (CE I 320).<sup>11</sup> When human character, or at least our view of it, changes, so characterization, which Woolf agrees is the most important element in the novel, must change. Following perhaps Hypo Wilson's advice to Miriam in The Tunnel to write "pieces of short prose, anything, a description of an old woman sitting in an omnibus . . . anything."<sup>12</sup> Woolf uses various methods of describing a hypothetical Mrs. Brown to illustrate her point.

The value system and corresponding method that Woolf advocates in these essays suggests Richardson's as Woolf herself describes it. Both women insist upon a shift from material to spiritual, from outer to inner reality in the presentation of characters. Both consider an obstruction to inner, everyday reality the conventional novel form with its emphasis on love and its neatly-devised structure of exceptional external events labeled comic or tragic. Yet Woolf is not satisfied with Richardson's method. Her charge is the perennial one against it: it lacks "art."<sup>13</sup> "We have to decide," she says in her review of The Tunnel, "whether the flying helter-skelter resolves itself by degrees into a perceptible whole." The work disappoints her in this respect, just as the work of the hypothetical Mary Carmichael disappoints her in A Room of One's Own (AROO 140-2). Its surface is "vivid," but Woolf is afraid that it is still surface, that it somehow lacks significance. She is aware, however, that her criticism may be unreasonable





and that her discomfort with Richardson's method suggests a certain contradiction:

We want to be rid of realism, to penetrate without its help into the regions beneath it, and further require that Miss Richardson shall fashion this new material into something which has the shapeliness of the old accepted forms. We are asking too much; but the extent of our asking proves that The Tunnel is better in its failure than most books in their success (CW 122).

Woolf sees Pilgrimage, at least the two portions she reviewed, as shapeless. She does not detect the "shapeless shapeliness" that Richardson attributes to the feminine consciousness and presumably to the art that is its organic product.

When it comes to her own art, Woolf does ask "too much." The fact that she does so indicates the major differences between the two women's views both of life and of the female artist. Woolf insists upon changes in both the content and the form of the novel, but she does not attack traditional or contemporary art as an ordering force. She consistently assumes that a work of art can provide the aesthetic pleasure, the order, and the meaning that she is not certain life itself, particularly the inner life, can provide.<sup>14</sup> In this context experimentation with various art forms suggests a sometimes frantic search for order and meaning in the face of a potentially terrifying and meaningless chaos. Woolf does not question the function of art as an ordering force, but she does attack the particular ordering mechanisms extant in the novel because they are based upon the view that external facts and events constitute reality. In other literary forms, like poetry and drama, and in other art media, like painting and music, she finds methods of ordering her material more appropriate for the expression of a character's inner life. The organic metaphor sometimes is more applicable





to the work of Woolf's major female artist-characters than to her own work to which it can be applied only in the sense that her material prompts a selection from a wider variety of established and contemporary literary and artistic forms than those included within the province of the traditional and contemporary novel. Critics trained in the arts as defined in a society dominated by masculine values find these forms, whatever experimental combinations Woolf makes of them, reasonably comprehensible and explicable. Possibly for this reason John Cowper Powys, one of the minority among commentators who prefers Richardson's work to Woolf's, accepts Richardson's own evaluation and dismisses Woolf as having used the "methods of men."<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Caesar Blake distinguishes between Woolf's "'art' novel" and Richardson's "'life' novel."<sup>16</sup>

Both Woolf and Richardson were convinced that a general reassessment of social values and even a redefinition of many of the words that express them was necessary. More thoroughgoing in this respect than Woolf, Richardson attacked, among numerous other words and concepts, "art" itself. She challenged the value it has been accorded in a male-dominated culture obsessed with various distorting and incomplete systems, categories, and forms, a culture driven continually toward action and production. She looked for and found sufficient order and pattern in the inner life itself. It is a source of aesthetic pleasure to which the so-called work of art need not, indeed cannot, add. The organic metaphor applies to Richardson's art in the sense that her material, the developing consciousness of Miriam Henderson, determines whatever form her art has. Fundamentally more optimistic, sane, and certain than Woolf,<sup>17</sup> Richardson actually applied to her fictional



method the implications of their shared belief that such a thing as the art of life exists and that all people are potential artists. Instead of continually experimenting with form, as Woolf did, Richardson did not begin Pilgrimage until she was certain of her world view and of the form appropriate to its expression. Once sure, she did not deviate.





F. The Creative Struggle in a Destructive Environment:  
Virginia Woolf's Lily Briscoe, Orlando, and Miss LaTrobe

Woolf, like Richardson, sees the female artist at work within an aesthetic environment dominated by masculine values. In a general sense, all of Woolf's characters are artists. North in The Years contemplates the creative power in all of us and so does his creator. In some of her characters, however, this power is largely potential; in others it is threatened in various ways or thwarted altogether. In some it is misdirected or only partially used; in others it is exercised legitimately in spheres of activity usually not considered art. Many of these characters experience moments of expanded, more inclusive perception. Woolf's designated artist-characters, therefore, are quantitatively not qualitatively different from the others. She always presents her artists in a social context in order to reveal that the difference between them and others is one of degree, in order to indicate that art and life are intimately connected, and in order to assess the results of a failure to recognize these facts. The artist experiences what the others experience, but his view of the human condition ultimately is more comprehensive than any of theirs. Because he sees certain value systems, experiences, and emotions as merely the parts of a more inclusive world-view, his own most intense involvement is reserved for a potentially more inclusive sphere of activity, the sphere of art.

One group of artists in Woolf's fiction, however, has lost touch, partially or totally, with some aspects of life; as artists their view is incomplete rather than inclusive. All of them are men. Woolf created two of them before she wrote her reviews of Richardson's Pilgrimage.



They are egoists and technicians with oversized intellects combined with traditional notions about women. St. John Hirst in The Voyage Out has these characteristics combined, however, with a certain amount of affection for and understanding of others. William Rodney in Night and Day has fewer redeeming qualities. He has an abundance of technical skill but little to say with it.

His theory was that every mood has its metre. His mastery of metres was very great; and, if the beauty of a drama depended upon the variety of measures in which the personages speak, Rodney's plays must have challenged the works of Shakespeare. Katharine's ignorance of Shakespeare did not prevent her from feeling fairly certain that plays should not produce a sense of chill stupor in the audience . . . . Still, she reflected, these sorts of skills are almost exclusively masculine; women neither practise them nor know how to value them; and one's husband's proficiency in this direction might legitimately increase one's respect for him, since mystification is no bad basis for respect (ND 143).<sup>1</sup>

His emphasis upon the traditional in art parallels his conventional notions about women. He strongly advocates marriage, not education for them and is very disturbed because the passion he senses in Katharine "never took the normal channel of glorification of him and his doings" (ND 258). Neville in The Waves has some of the same characteristics. He is a poet with a command of form and technique but a distrust of feeling, inspiration. He cannot abandon himself to his emotion and, because he draws back at the crucial moment, his art suffers. He cannot give life to the ordered forms he constructs.

Two of the major artist-characters, however, who stand in contrast to these three also are men. Both Terence Hewet in The Voyage Out and Bernard in The Waves see multiplicities and complexities that St. John Hirst and Neville do not see. Both have a number of feminine characteristics. Hewet, in fact, often sounds as if he has been reading Woolf's as yet unwritten Three Guineas. He scorns, for example, traditional





social hierarchies: "'What a miracle the masculine conception of life is--judges, civil servants, army, navy, Houses of Parliament, lord mayors --what a world we've made of it'" (VO 253). He questions the institution of marriage, particularly its implications for women. Moreover, he challenges literary traditions. The most interesting of these challenges is his proposed novel on Silence, "'the things people don't say'" (VO 262). His desire to write such a novel grows, perhaps, out of his conviction that people are very complex, difficult to know and to understand. He finds the problems inherent in his project, however, formidable. They are the problems Richardson's Miriam confronts in her encounter with Hypo Wilson and Edna Prout. "'All you read a novel for,'" Hewet accuses Rachel Vinrace and the reading public in general, "'is to see what sort of person the writer is, and, if you know him, which of his friends he's put in. As for the novel itself, the whole conception, the way one's seen the thing, felt about it, made it stand in relation to other things, not one in a million cares for that'" (VO 262). His distinction is the one Miriam makes between seeing the author in his work in an autobiographical sense and seeing the real author, his awareness of "life in its own right at first hand." Naturally a man interested in suggesting the complexities of the inner life, the things people do not say, would counsel Rachel to read poetry.

Hewet also exhibits a keen interest in the lives different kinds of women live. Women, he insists, have not been represented adequately in fiction:

"Just consider: it's the beginning of the twentieth century, and until a few years ago no woman had even come out by herself and said things at all. There it was going on in the background, for all those thousands of years, this curious silent unrepresented life. Of course we're always writing about women--





abusing them, or jeering at them, or worshipping them; but it's never come from women themselves. I believe we still don't know in the least how they live, or what they feel, or what they do precisely. If one's a man, the only confidences one gets are from young women about their love affairs. But the lives of women of forty, of unmarried women, of working women, of women who keep shops and bring up children, . . .--one knows nothing whatever about them. They won't tell you. Either they're afraid, or they've got a way of treating men. It's the man's view that's represented, you see" (VO 258).

To make up for his own lack of understanding, he questions Rachel closely and combines his narrative and theoretical skill with her curiosity and sensitivity, his sense of life as complex but fundamentally solid with her sense of life as ephemeral. Rachel is an artist herself, a talented pianist, although not a professional. Some evidence exists to indicate that Hewet is enough of a traditional male to wish her to subordinate her pursuit of art to his, but in general he likes her commitment. The two of them together compose the androgynous artist.

Bernard in The Waves is a more difficult case. He is conscious of having a double self, male and female, a "double capacity to feel, to reason" (W 82). This split is evident in everything he says and does. Yet somehow, as in the case of some of Sinclair's artist-characters, his two sides seem in debilitating conflict rather than in productive balance. He is so aware of multiplicity and complexity that he rarely discovers unity, at least in himself. He plays numerous roles, mostly identifying with romantic poets, heroes, or supermen, most frequently with Byron. He feels indistinguishable, furthermore, from the other five characters in the novel as well as from all of the people he might have been himself. Like every role-player, Bernard is utterly dependent upon an audience. His stories fall apart without one; so does his self. He has moments, however, when he feels himself unified, and he waits in vain for the fragments



of the stories he creates to fall into a similar unity, to form the definitive story.

The suggestion is that his search for meaning by way of the traditional story-line or plot is misguided. Neat sequences do not encompass the life he experiences.

"How tired I am of stories, how tired I am of phrases that come down beautifully with all their feet on the ground! Also, how I distrust neat designs of life that are drawn upon half-sheets of note-paper. I begin to long for some little language such as lovers use, broken words, inarticulate words, like the shuffling of feet on the pavement. I begin to seek some design more in accordance with those moments of humiliation and triumph that come now and then undeniably" (W 261).

The story, as Bernard tries to write it, does not allow him to express the multiplicity he experiences, the lack of sequences, the continual change. Moreover, it does not allow him to express the kind of unity and continuity that may actually exist, that is felt only at moments. While Bernard has the characteristics of the androgynous artist, he is inhibited by literary tradition. When he questions that tradition, it is too late; he is old; death lies ahead of him. Because he does not really know what he cannot express, what he cannot put into some sort of artistic form, he is left with multiplicity and the old methods of seeking unity.

Because they work in a social and aesthetic context dominated by masculine values, therefore, even Woolf's male artist-characters have difficulties. The restrictions put upon women's experience and expression contribute to as well as perpetuate male ignorance about their lives and values. The inadequate characterization of women in novels is one result. Even when masculine aesthetic traditions prove inadequate to communicate what the male artist experiences, he often sees no alternatives. The primary repository of such alternatives has not been sufficiently articulate to provide them.





Woolf shows the major female artist-characters in her fiction struggling toward that provision. Lily Briscoe in To the Lighthouse has to fight for the courage to express honestly her own vision in the most appropriate aesthetic form. She struggles within an alien aesthetic environment dominated by a man who paints only evanescent surfaces. Orlando's difficulty is realizing that she is an artist who shares an inclusive perspective and a skill in expressing it with other artists, male or female, regardless of the opinions of women that prevail in her social environment. Such opinions have prevented or inhibited women's artistic production and achievement, but mainly because women have held them themselves or have handicapped themselves as greatly by reacting with anger, bitterness, or defiance. In Orlando Woolf tries to sort out what is continuous in the creative process from what is superimposed by the changing spirits of various ages. In Between the Acts, as well as in Orlando, Woolf suggests the need for an infusion of so-called feminine values into an art and a society dominated by masculine values. The male Orlando pursues praise and fame. He tries to write in numerous established traditions and styles, hoping to win glory and immortality for himself. Shortly after he embraces obscurity and the pursuit of truth and decides to write to please himself, he becomes a woman. As a woman, Orlando puts the work of art, not herself or her reputation, first. Progress, the book implies, has been made. Miss LaTrobe represents the influence of masculine values in another way. She manifests the masculine desire to command and control as well as the violence resulting from the frustration of those desires. Ultimately, however, she sees her desires in the context of the entire history of man and of the natural world. She, her art, and presumably society as a whole, benefit.



To the Lighthouse

"She examined the drawings she had just made--bad, unfinished, half-made, half-seen, not felt at all. All her feeling had gone into self-indulgence, self-pity, and she had done nothing but dull hard lines, enclosing perfect emptiness . . . . Black and white--no more of that for her. She would draw directly on the canvas with brush and colors as she had done before, and damn David's advice. I sold out, she said, for a mess of pottage and I didn't even get that. Well, good God, can you imagine? I was letting that fellow tell me how to paint."

Jenny Brown in Katherine Anne Porter's Ship of Fools (1945)

Lily Briscoe's feelings of inferiority result from both the view that women cannot produce significant art and that marriage is the only proper outlet for their energies. A third cause of her self-doubts is artistic tradition. The extent to which the long tradition preceding her efforts disconcerts her is suggested by her comment to William Bankes that perhaps one ought not look at pictures painted by the great masters because one's own paintings are so unsatisfactory in comparison (L 114). Lily is concerned less with the great masters, however, than with the popular precedent set by an artist of her own day. Just as public opinion about female artists is represented in the person of Charles Tansley and the idea that marriage is the only possible vocation for women is represented in the person of Mrs. Ramsay, so the public's taste in painting is represented by a certain Mr. Paunceforte. As a character in the novel he is insignificant, no more than a name. But Lily feels his influence. In Three Guineas Woolf counsels female artists to practise "for the sake of the art," not for money or for praise (TG 145-6). In To the Lighthouse Lily must stop worrying whether her painting will "be hung in the servants' bedrooms" or "rolled up and stuffed under a sofa" (L 245). She must forget what is fashionable and likely to be liked. Instead, she must attend to





her own vision. "'But this is what I see; this is what I see,'" she keeps repeating to herself.

What she sees is different from what Paunceforte has painted. To join his followers presumably would be easy. Lily, however, refuses to do so, just as she refuses to give up painting in response to Tansley's taunt and to marry in response to Mrs. Ramsay's pressure. She has trouble, however, when she tries to express her own vision on canvas. Her nonconformity is another cause of the self-consciousness that prevents her from losing herself in her work. Nevertheless, she insists upon her own view of "colour burning on a framework of steel; the light of a butterfly's wing lying upon the arches of a cathedral" (L 78). However often her efforts are frustrated, Lily keeps trying to paint both the transient and the permanent. She keeps trying to paint the solid something she perceives beneath the evanescence that Paunceforte has been satisfied to portray. Continuing to do what Woolf would have the female artist do, Lily struggles to express her own vision in her own way instead of humbly imitating the men who dominate her medium.

In the setting that she thinks Paunceforte and his followers have so distorted, Lily's subject initially is Mrs. Ramsay and James, mother and child. She explains her intentions to William Bankes. She insists that the painting is nonrepresentational, that it is not of mother and child in the traditional sense, and that it is not irreverent (L 85). Mother and child often have been painted in a religious context. But more than that, Lily paints the kind of woman who is revered by society, the kind she is not; her defensiveness reflects her self-doubts as a woman. Bankes admits that he had never considered before that the problem of a painter could be "one of the relations of masses, of lights and shadows" (L 86).





While a number of critics have established the general similarity between Lily's views on painting and those of Roger Fry, the important consideration here is that within the novel itself, Lily's ideas are presented as distinctly her own. She sees her traditional subject differently and finds a method of presentation that corresponds.

In doing so, Lily chooses the more difficult course. Painting to her is inseparable from knowing. She wants to penetrate and communicate the essence of Mrs. Ramsay, to discover what is solid and unchanging beneath her beautiful, public self. "What was the spirit in her," Lily asks herself, "the essential thing, by which, had you found a crumpled glove in the corner of a sofa, you would have known it, from its twisted finger, hers indisputably?" (L 79). Lily does not try to capture only the Mrs. Ramsay who defers to her husband, thrives upon chivalry, and insists that people marry. Lily tries to intuit and to present also the private Mrs. Ramsay who, in moments of silence and solitude, loses her public personality and comes into touch with eternity. However much Lily is pressured by the public Mrs. Ramsay, she senses another one. The "wedge-shaped core of darkness" that Mrs. Ramsay becomes in her silent moments is as different from her public personality as Lily's nonrepresentational painting, using shapes and masses, is different from paintings that merely represent evanescent surface details.

When Lily paints Mrs. Ramsay, she tries to see beneath the details of her external beauty to her fundamental shape. In Part I, she sees her as "an august shape; the shape of a dome" (L 83). In Part III, again trying to capture the essence of Mrs. Ramsay, Lily feels "as if a door had opened, and one went in and stood gazing silently about in a high cathedral-like place, very dark, very solemn" while the outside world



recedes (L 264). Lily is absorbed in her painting, and simultaneously, in memories of the past. She is within the dome, the cathedral-like place, Mrs. Ramsay's mind. She imagines Mrs. Ramsay's distrust of words and of attempts to communicate meaning with them as well as Mrs. Ramsay's love of silence (L 264-5). Here, not in deference and marriage, is her ability to make "life stand still." Real solidity is not institutionalized and verbalized; it manifests itself only in "little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark" (L 249). It involves being "on a level with ordinary experience," feeling "simply that's a chair, that's a table, and yet at the same time, It's a miracle, it's an ecstasy" (L 309-10). It involves, as Richardson says, a sense of "life in its own right at first hand." Lily, in her attempt to paint Mrs. Ramsay, comes to see art as the reconciliation of, or perhaps the perpetual tension between public and private, temporal and eternal, mundane and miraculous, just as the lighthouse itself combines motion and stability.

Like the circling light of the lighthouse, the eye of the artist is inclusive. A physical element exists in Lily's attraction to Mrs. Ramsay, but, as in the case of Richardson's Miriam, there is less of the lesbian and more of the artist in Lily's attitude than one might think. Lily cannot paint Mrs. Ramsay unless she knows her, intuitively what about her is essential. Similarly, the struggle to paint Mrs. Ramsay assists Lily in knowing. Her most intense moments of insight occur while she paints or while she thinks of her painting. Knowing Mrs. Ramsay ultimately means concluding that words, physical intimacy, and even her own view of the woman are inadequate. Just as Lily realizes how one-sided her view of Tansley has been, so she realizes that "one wanted fifty pairs of eyes" at least "to get round that one woman with" (L 303). She has to imagine





how both men and women see Mrs. Ramsay as well as how she appears to herself. In her struggle for inclusiveness, Lily identifies not with Paunceforte, the painter, but with Carmichael, the poet, whom she perceives for one brief moment as having encompassed the human condition (L 319).

In refusing to imitate the fashionable manner in painting, therefore, Lily Briscoe launches herself onto a choppy metaphysical sea. Unwilling to accept the limited assumptions about reality implied by representational painting, she must probe for a more inclusive definition and a way to express it on her own. All of her self-doubts cause her to hesitate, to draw back at moments from this infinitely more difficult course. But, along with her perseverance in the face of both negative opinions about female artists and the traditional notion that women must marry, her insistence upon expressing her own vision in her own way proves her commitment as an artist and provides hope for female artists in general.

### Orlando

Similarly, in Orlando Woolf suggests not only the extent to which the female artist has problems in addition to those confronted by the male artist, but also the progress that occurs in the course of the artist's transformation from male to female. Like Lily Briscoe, Orlando learns to trust her own vision and to concern herself with the integrity of the work of art, not with praise and fame. In Orlando, Woolf also explores the implications for the female artist of the relationship between the artist and tradition and the artist and his age.

Orlando as a female artist is not so much tempted by praise and fame, tradition and the literary marketplace, because she, as a male artist, pursues and rejects all of these. Very early in his career,



Orlando confronts the fact that literature demands a certain way of expressing oneself that is very unlike everyday expression. We first encounter him writing a poetic drama in which he personifies abstractions, unravels incredible plots in fantastic settings, voices lofty ideals and says not one word in his own manner. Once, however, Orlando has the temerity to observe closely the laurel bush he describes. Because he discovers that "green in nature is one thing, green in literature another," he can write no longer. A description of green as it is in nature, he realizes, will destroy his rhyme and rhythm (O 18). Later, after a similar experience with grass and the sky, he despairs "of being able to solve the problem of what poetry is and what truth is" (O 94-5). Orlando, like Lily Briscoe, cannot separate expression and knowledge. Art is a search for and an expression of whatever meaning he finds in life. At this point in his career neither extremely simple nor extremely elaborate diction satisfies him. None of the styles and structures of his literary predecessors or contemporaries suffice.

The important decision prompted by his disillusionment is preceded by a prodigious struggle with the English language and literary tradition as well as with a representative of the literary marketplace, Nick Greene. The English language both exalts and fails him, as it does many of Woolf's other major artist-figures. Just as neat phrases continually occur to Bernard in The Waves, so extravagant images and rhymes continually come into Orlando's head, especially when he is in love. These images and rhymes, however, and all of the literary traditions he knows seem trite when applied to Sasha, the Russian princess. Indeed, the English language itself lacks the subtlety necessary to describe her. Just as Bernard in The Waves and Lily in To the Lighthouse look for a verbal or visual language





that will capture solidity and transiency at once, so Orlando wants a language that will suggest Sasha's double nature, all that she conceals as well as all that she reveals. Futile as the search seems, he decides to continue it because he concludes that writers achieve with more difficulty, greater glory and immortality than even the greatest warriors.

Because this glory must be conferred by other people, Orlando leaves his solitary room and encounters Nick Greene. To Orlando, poetry is sacred, and Shakespeare, Marlowe, Ben Jonson, and Donne are heroes. Nick Greene prefers prose because it is easier to sell and can be written faster. Like a number of Sinclair's characters, moreover, he idealizes the past. He insists that Orlando's literary heroes, all of whom are flawed both as writers and as people, do not measure up to the Greeks. The encounter with Nick Greene, who thanks Orlando for his patronage by satirizing him, suggests the folly both of modeling his work upon that of other writers and of courting fame. Orlando burns all of his works except one and concludes that obscurity, which grants the writer a freedom of mind that fame denies him, is more likely to produce something truthful. Most importantly, he decides, "'Bad, good, or indifferent, I'll write, from this day forward, to please myself" (O 96). By renouncing fame, by embracing obscurity and truth as he sees it, and by cutting himself free from literary tradition, Orlando, though still physically male, does what Woolf would have the female artist do. That he very shortly becomes a woman is, in this context, not surprising.

Like her male self in the Elizabethan age, the nineteenth-century Orlando encounters Nick Greene. Her motives for abandoning solitude, however, are different. The male Orlando was driven by ambition to seek fame. The female Orlando wants her finally-completed poem to live in a





way that is possible only if it is read. Her concern is less for herself than for the life of her work. Since only other human beings can read, Orlando seeks them out. Greene, now clean, plump, and prosperous, is a knight, a professor, an author, and a highly-respected critic. He still lauds the past and condemns the present except that now the Elizabethans have replaced the Greeks as his ideal. The earlier Orlando tried to write in other people's styles and the earlier Greene criticized the result as "wordy and bombastic in the extreme" (0 89). The female Orlando, in contrast, writes to please herself and wants to give life to the one poem that most nearly expresses her own vision. Greene, the Victorian literary critic, reacts favorably, albeit for dubious reasons. Like many critics who respond to a woman's work, he cannot allow that the poem is hers alone. Comparing it to Addison's Cato and Thompson's Seasons, he admires it because it does not strike him as modern. Orlando does not like literary criticism because it makes her feel hesitant about speaking her mind and doomed to write like other people. Nevertheless, in order to give her work life, she faces such annoyances and runs the gauntlet of modern publishing. The shift in values between the male and the female Orlando is a shift from an emphasis on the glory of the artist to an emphasis on the "glory of poetry" (0 150). That the pursuit of praise and fame is associated with masculinity and youth is not accidental. In Three Guineas, we recall, Woolf associates the masculine desire for attention with a little boy's trumpeting and strutting.

Neither Woolf nor Richardson advises women to pursue praise and fame. One reason why the great nineteenth-century women writers hid behind male pseudonyms, Woolf says, was because of the notion that women must not be talked about (AR00 75-6). She implies that such self-effacement



is a handicap. By the time she writes Three Guineas, however, she has contemplated the results of the desire for fame and has changed her mind. In that book she looks for a middle ground somewhere between the total self-effacement women have been taught and the continual pursuit of fame characteristic of many men. The female artist must not shrink from becoming known, but she must not sell her brain or compromise her art for money or popularity. In fact, "ridicule, obscurity and censure are preferable, for psychological reasons, to fame and praise" (TG 145-6). Similarly, Richardson associates ambition and the desire for recognition with men. They base their identities upon what they produce rather than upon what they are. Such a state of mind can bring only "the subtlest form of despair."<sup>2</sup>

Orlando's poem, "The Oak Tree," is a measure both of the change and the continuity in English cultural history and of Orlando's diversity and unity. As the latter, the poem functions in Orlando somewhat as Lily's portrait of Mrs. Ramsay functions in To the Lighthouse. In Part I, Lily first attempts to paint Mrs. Ramsay. In Part III, she attacks again the problem that has preoccupied her for years. The attempt evokes memories and encourages self-evaluation, summing up. A more comprehensive, balanced perspective enables her to achieve a moment of illumination and thus to complete the painting. This process in Orlando is much attenuated. Orlando writes and rewrites her poem for four centuries. During this long period of time, the spirits of various ages are reflected. But the creative process, the subject of the poem, and Orlando herself remain fundamentally the same. Memory and self-evaluation play a significant role, but flashes of insight are subsumed in the gradual accretion of experience and understanding. Orlando seems merely to have stopped





working on "The Oak Tree" rather than to have finished it. The process of change and continuity that began so far in the past extends into the future.

"The Oak Tree" stands apart from the rest of Orlando's writing. It is the only poem by the verbally extravagant young nobleman that has a "monosyllabic title"; it is very brief, and it represents to him a "boyish dream" that preceded his pursuit of glory (O 73, 90). When, disillusioned with Nick Greene and with literature in general, he burns his fifty-seven other works, "The Oak Tree" is the only poem he keeps and continues to write. The narrator tells us, however, that as the Elizabethan age gives way to its successor, Orlando's style changes markedly. It becomes more prosaic, less ornamental and profuse (O 104). In the eighteenth century, too, Orlando's poem reflects the spirit of the age. Her thoughts as she looks at her poem indicate that reason reigns, moral purpose is high, and composition is carried on with much deliberation and self-criticism. Orlando worries about too many "S's" and "-ing's" in the first stanzas of the poem. She shapes and reshapes her words so as not to distort her message (O 157-8).

In the nineteenth century, however, inspiration overwhelms her. When she takes up her pen she cannot control it. To her horror, it writes "in the neatest sloping Italian hand . . . the most insipid verse she had ever read in her life" (O 215). Or else it makes "one large lachrymose blot after another, or it ambled off, more alarmingly still into mellifluous fluencies about early death and corruption" (O 219). Even after her marriage, the spirit of the nineteenth century looks over her shoulder, decides whether or not certain thoughts are sufficiently ladylike, and ponders the extent to which her married status gives her the



right to make certain kinds of comments. "By some dexterous deference to the spirit of the age, by putting on a ring and finding a man on a moor, by loving nature and being no satirist, cynic, or psychologist," Orlando barely passes these examinations. She is relieved that she both can embody her age and maintain her independence (O 239-40).

Orlando's good fortune is exceptional. In a 1918 review, Woolf notes that her predecessors in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were judged according to how successfully their works conformed to the high moral standard expected of women and perpetuated the ignorance of potential young women readers. Whether the woman artist conformed or rebelled, she concentrated on matters extraneous to art. Another reason why women writers used men's names, Woolf thinks, was because they wanted to free themselves "as they wrote from the tyranny of what was expected from their sex" (CW 25). In "Professions for Women," she discusses this problem at greater length and with some humor. She personifies the self-abnegation, ignorance, and purity which the public, represented so capably by Mrs. Ellis in The Daughters of England, expects of women as "The Angel in the House." This phantom advises the female writer to flatter men and to hide from them her intelligence and her opinions. If the female writer does not kill this phantom, Woolf insists, it will kill her as an artist (CE II 285-6). Any artist must enter into an unself-conscious state as he writes. The woman writer, however, too likely is recalled abruptly to self-consciousness by certain restrictions placed upon her.<sup>3</sup>

For this and other reasons, Orlando and her poem change. Yet they remain the same. This continuity in change is suggested by Or-



lando's association of the poem with the oak tree of the title. As a young, sixteenth-century nobleman, Orlando spends much time composing poetry at the foot of a large oak tree near his family home. To him, the tree represents solidity beneath the changing seasons and an enduring affection beneath all of his transient ones. His poem, "The Oak Tree," like Lily Briscoe's painting of Mrs. Ramsay, presumably tries to capture this duality. All three, the tree, the poem, and Orlando, grow and develop throughout the centuries until at the end of the novel they are together once again.<sup>4</sup> While the tree has grown, it remains relatively young. Its leaves still flutter above Orlando; its roots still extend like ribs through the earth beneath her. After Orlando realizes that, like the tree, she is essentially unchanged, she can conclude her poem.

Even though Orlando gains recognition as a poet, she associates poetry not with praise and fame but with a sensitive interchange between the poet and the world around him:

Was not writing poetry a secret transaction, a voice answering a voice? So that all this chatter and praise and blame and meeting people who did not admire one was ill suited as could be to the thing itself--a voice answering a voice. What could have been more secret, she thought, more slow, and like the intercourse of lovers, than the stammering answer she had made all these years to the old crooning song of the woods, and the farms and the brown horses standing at the gate, neck to neck, and the smithy and the kitchen and the fields, so laboriously bearing wheat, turnips, grass, and the gardens blowing irises and fritillaries? (O 292).

The voice the artist learns to listen to is not that of literary tradition; nor is it the voice of the spirit of the age, although it cannot be shut out entirely. The voice she listens to is the voice of life itself. It tells of solidity and transiency, continuity and change. However "stammering," her answer reflects the understanding she has gained.





Orlando's continuity and that of her poem transcend the sex change from male to female. The female artist's work can be inhibited much more severely by spirits in certain ages, like the nineteenth century, which define woman's role in an extremely restrictive manner. However formidable the obstacles placed in the female artist's path, she is primarily an artist; whatever society says being female means is secondary. The latter, in some ages, will disguise pretty well the former. For this reason, Woolf places so much emphasis upon environment and the inhibiting self-doubts that it can inculcate in the female artist. Change, however, has a positive side as well as a negative. The possibility remains of ages during which "female" does not exclude "artist," in which a woman is allowed to share with other artists, regardless of sex, the impersonality of the creative process and the desire to probe for and to express honestly the realities of the human condition. The fact that Orlando receives recognition as a poet in this century is as significant as the fact that she receives it when it no longer means anything to her.

#### Between the Acts

"Most of one's life is an entr'acte."

Gumbril in Aldous Huxley's Antic Hay (1925)

In Between the Acts Woolf is concerned no longer with the problems that the female artist confronts merely because she is a woman. The fact that Isa Oliver hides from her husband the effusive poetry she writes "in a book bound like an account book" (BA 62) suggests that negative views of the female artist perhaps exist. Yet Isa's poems are less art than the products of her self-indulgent introspection,<sup>5</sup> romantic infidelities which, as long as they are kept secret, add spice to her life. Unlike Orlando's "The Oak Tree," they do not depend for their life upon being read



by others. Miss LaTrobe as a playwright, however, depends even more than Orlando upon an audience. Between the Acts has multiple points of view and an elusive narrative voice like To the Lighthouse; nevertheless, none of the members of her audience respond to Miss LaTrobe with either contempt or pity because she is an unmarried woman and an artist. Her doubts about her ability as an artist, unlike Lily Briscoe's, do not seem related directly to these facts. Nor does she worry about her work as measured against that of either traditional or contemporary dramatists although she parodies earlier dramatic works within her pageant. She worries only about creating plays and about establishing rapport with her audience by means of them. Only when she creates or produces her plays is she fully alive. Unlike Lily, she feels no particular affection or respect for any of the other characters; nor does she criticize them as individuals. The subject of her work of art is not one of them but all of them and all of their predecessors besides. Focused upon the group, not upon the individual, her work departs from one stereotype of feminine art. "'I' rejected; 'we' substituted," Woolf notes about Between the Acts in her diary (WD 289). Because Miss LaTrobe's work is a historical pageant that she produces as well as writes, she not only works with visual and verbal elements but also copes with and is aided by human and natural elements. She therefore is both less and more involved with the life around her than Lily is. She has no strong ties with other individuals; at the same time, life in general is the very stuff of her art.<sup>6</sup>

Like Orlando, Miss LaTrobe is concerned with English history. Instead of moving through English history herself, although indirectly she does that too, however, Miss LaTrobe drives her amateur actors and actresses through it and forces both past and present, like bitter





medicine, upon her audience. Orlando, as female artist, has to overcome both her defiant and deferential responses to the male values she encounters, values that the narrator of the book sometimes reflects. In Between the Acts, however, Miss LaTrobe does in part what the narrator does in Orlando in that she recreates and parodies aspects of English cultural history. Moreover, like the narrator of the earlier book, Miss LaTrobe herself is caricatured. She is a female artist who reflects to a considerable extent, male values. She is something like Orlando in that she reflects the spirit of her age, the spirit Woolf denounces in Three Guineas, the spirit that led to World War I and that, in Between the Acts, is leading to the explosion of violence that is World War II.

Woolf, however, does not merely caricature Miss LaTrobe. Her creative agony, though intensified by the frustrated age in which she lives, is genuine. So is her relief which is also, by implication, the relief of England. By establishing a new relationship with the natural world, she averts her figurative death, alleviates her frustration, and calms her violence. She sees both English past and English present in the even larger context of all human and nonhuman history, past, present, and, by implication, future. Whatever her relapses, Miss LaTrobe, like Lily Briscoe and like Orlando, ultimately is androgynous. Consequently, although much disagreement exists among critics on this point, the overall tone of the book is one of qualified optimism.<sup>7</sup>

To call Miss LaTrobe a female artist at times seems a misnomer. Her hinted sexual preferences, her appearance, her leadership qualities, and her violence, society traditionally defines as masculine. Little is known about her past, although she is rumored to have shared a cottage at one time with an actress. To the other characters in the novel she



looks "swarthy, sturdy and thick set; strode about the fields in a smock frock; sometimes with a cigarette in her mouth; often with a whip in her hand; and used rather strong language" (BA 72). She looks like a "commander pacing his deck," and her nickname is "Bossy." As a decisive and peremptory leader, she is disliked by individuals but appealed to by groups who need someone to assume responsibility for decisions and, perhaps more important, blame for failures (BA 77-8). A relatively successful leader, Miss LaTrobe knows human nature and exploits the vanity of her amateur actors and actresses to gain her aesthetic ends (BA 79).

Most striking, however, is her violence. The enormous, seething emotions that are pent up within her all result from and are directed toward her art. Her greatest desire is to communicate with her audience. She wills and drives all elements of the production toward that end, but frustration and failure dog her almost superhuman efforts. When her actors delay and the audience's attention wanders, she gnashes her teeth (BA 145). Like the stage villain in a melodrama she curses the audience from behind a tree (BA 94). She growls at the "torture" of the interruptions caused by people arriving late (BA 97). The audience's demands for reasonably short scenes and for breaks fill her with rage:

"Curse! Blast! Damn 'em!" Miss LaTrobe in her rage stubbed her toe against a root. Here was her downfall; here was the Interval. Writing this skimble-skamble stuff in her cottage, she had agreed to cut the play here; a slave to her audience, --to Mrs. Sands' grumble--about tea; about dinner;--she had gashed the scene here. Just as she had brewed emotion, she spilt it (BA 113).

If only she could write a play without the audience, she thinks. What infuriates her the most is that "every second they were slipping the noose" (BA 210).

The noose Miss LaTrobe tries to fling around the collective neck of





her audience is a recurrent image in her thoughts as her production unfolds. It suggests the almost destructive intensity of her involvement in her production. Indeed, her emotions are so violent during the performance that she grinds a hole in the grass with her heels (BA 245). When she feels its attention wandering, "grating her fingers in the bark, she damned the audience. Panic seized her. Blood seemed to pour from her shoes. This is death, death, death, she noted in the margin of her mind; when illusion fails" (BA 210). Miss LaTrobe's cursing, clenching, gnashing, gashing, grinding, and grating combined with the recurrent images of violence and death, the noose and blood, reflect the tension and terror in the larger world surrounding that of her pageant. Creation is married at gun-point to destruction, birth to death. Miss LaTrobe is at war; she must overwhelm or be overwhelmed. To do so, she must control and command every part of the operation.

Miss LaTrobe's war is part of the larger atmosphere of war. When Isa Oliver recalls someone's remark that "'books are the mirrors of the soul'" (BA 22), she decides that "for her generation the newspaper was a book" (BA 26). The soul mirrored in the newspapers mentioned in Between the Acts is not a soul at peace. The mood of the newspaper article that Isa reads is one of violence. The Times recounts the initially ludicrous experience of a girl whom troopers lure to look at a horse with a green tail and then attack (BA 27). Isa keeps recalling the article. Newspaper accounts of violence also haunt her husband, Giles, to the extent that he wonders how he can come home peacefully and change his clothes for lunch (BA 58).

Blood, death, and violence cross the minds of other characters as well. Most innocuous is the servants' legend about a lady drowning herself





for love in the lily pond to which her ghost returns at night (BA 55). Less romantic is Lucy Swithin's memory of a childhood experience. Forced by her brother to remove the hook from a fish she has caught, Lucy cries out at the sight of the creature's blood. Her brother's reaction suggests manly contempt for feminine weakness (BA 28). These events, however, occur in the past. Snatches of conversation during and after the pageant reveal that many members of the audience fear violence, bloodshed, and death in the near future. War is imminent. Colonel Mayhew, for example, finds the pageant incomplete without the British Army (BA 184). The final words from Miss LaTrobe's megaphone, however, probably are not what he has in mind: "Consider the gun slayers, bomb droppers here or there," says a voice. "They do openly what we do slyly" (BA 218). Covert violence and destruction become overt in war. The audience is uneasy about such a possibility:

"It all looks very black."

"No one wants it--save those damned Germans" (BA 177).

"I agree--things look worse than ever on the continent. And what's the channel, come to think of it, if they mean to invade us? The aeroplanes, I didn't like to say it, made one think . . ." (BA 232).

The reference to airplanes recalls an interruption near the end of Reverend Streatfield's concluding remarks. A dozen planes passing in formation above their heads remind some members of the audience that England is vulnerable.

Woolf's novels are difficult to discuss without dealing with certain images around which so many associations accumulate that they take on the importance of symbols. Images recur in Richardson's Pilgrimage but, perhaps because there are so many of them, they rarely assume the significance or suggestiveness that the lighthouse assumes in To the Lighthouse



or the oak tree assumes in Orlando. In Between the Acts the most powerful and comprehensive image of violence, blood, and death is Giles's killing of the choking snake. Walking about between the acts, Giles finds

couched in the grass, curled in an olive green ring, . . . a snake. Dead? No, choked with a toad in its mouth. The snake was unable to swallow; the toad was unable to die. A spasm made the ribs contract; blood oozed. It was birth the wrong way round--a monstrous inversion. So, raising his foot, he stamped on them. The mass crushed and slithered. The white canvas on his tennis shoes was bloodstained and sticky. But it was action. Action relieved him. He strode to the Barn, with blood on his shoes (BA 119).

The snake, unable to live, choking on the toad, unable to die, suggests the indeterminate condition of many people in the novel and of England and Europe as well.<sup>8</sup> William Dodge, for example, even uses the snake image to describe his situation: "'I'm a half-man,'" he tells Mrs. Swithin, "'a flickering, mind-divided little snake in the grass . . . as Giles saw'" (BA 90). Shortly before Giles kills the snake, in fact, he labels William an example of "perversion" (BA 118). His killing of the snake partly relieves the frustration that results from the contempt he feels for some of the people around him. The act, however, raises two questions: Is there no other way Giles can be relieved? Is Giles's way the only means to relieve the snake?

Mrs. Manressa and Isa Oliver have two very different views of Giles's act, what little they know of it from looking at his shoes. Mrs. Manressa notices the blood and is pleased: "Vaguely some sense that he had proved his valour for her admiration flattered her. . . . Taking him in tow, she felt: I am the Queen, he my hero, my sulky hero" (BA 128). In Three Guineas Woolf labels this attitude among women destructive; women's admiration for proofs of courage results in and perpetuates





unnecessary atrocities and bloodshed. Isa, on the other hand, sees Giles as a "'Silly little boy, with blood on his boots'" (BA 133) and later, when she refuses to look directly at him, his eyes drop to his spattered shoes (BA 205). Isa considers him childish, ignores his trophy, and makes him feel somewhat nonplussed by it. Giles, of course, prefers Mrs. Manressa's company because she makes him feel important and in control rather than peripheral and at the mercy of other people and forces.

Woolf relates in a complex way Giles's killing of the snake to Miss LaTrobe and her agony behind the tree. She embodies both his violence and the snake's indeterminate position. She has some of his intolerance and contempt, although it is directed at the behavior of groups, her actors and her audience, rather than at individuals. Like Giles she relieves herself of her frustration by resorting to violent behavior. She has a similar desire to act, to assert herself, to control a situation, and a similar dislike of details beyond her control. Yet the blood that "seemed to pour from her shoes" is as much related to the blood oozing from the choking snake as it is to the blood on Giles's tennis shoes. She is not relieved by her violence. The failure of her illusion which is "death, death, death" without the relief of dying is, like the situation of the choking snake and undying frog, a "birth the wrong way round--a monstrous inversion." Miss LaTrobe chokes on a vision she can neither rid herself of nor communicate.

She is relieved of her living death, however, not by actual death but by the intercession of the natural world. The first time she experiences failure of illusion, panic, and death, the cows intercede. Their mournful bellowing sweeps together the fragmented audience and makes it



one both with the outdoor setting in which the pageant is performed and with the whole of human and nonhuman life present and past. When Miss LaTrobe experiences loss of illusion and death again, rain suddenly falls "like all the people in the world weeping" (BA 210). In other, lesser ways, the natural world aids in the creation of illusion. As the gramophone poetically sums up a pastoral scene to illustrate the peace and order of the Age of Reason, for example, the restful landscape surrounding actors and audience communicates the same thing (BA 159). At a later point real swallows fly across a sheet with ripples painted on it to suggest a lake (BA 192). Still later, when actors and actresses hold up to the audience mirrors reflecting themselves, the noise and activity arouse the natural world and both cows and dogs join in; the usual separation between "Man the Master" and "Brute" breaks down (BA 215).

Nature, however, does not always take merely the part "Man the Master" assigns her. Miss LaTrobe plans to utilize the natural world to some extent in her production, but only on her terms, only in ways she can control. She wants to present the Modern Age simply by giving her audience a quiet ten minutes of the scene around them. But these ten minutes prove "too strong" (BA 209) and she has to try something else. Moreover, the wind consistently blows away the words that the villagers sing as they weave among the trees and competes by rustling the leaves (BA 147; 164; 191). The natural world even casts some of the lines of the pageant into an unintended comic light. For example, "(a cow mooded. A bird twittered)" as Queen Elizabeth recalls how Shakespeare sang for her (BA 102). The artist's relationship to the natural world apparently must differ from that of the highly-civilized, highly-educated man who thinks he can control and utilize it for his own ends. The artist





apparently must perceive such efforts, as well as the varieties of egoism, pettiness, intolerance, frustration, and violence that accompany them, in the larger context of the vast, continual flow of life that is the natural world. Miss LaTrobe and, by implication, English civilization are rejuvenated by a sympathetic, respectful interaction between human and nonhuman.

That Miss LaTrobe at moments loses control, relaxes out of the mood of frustration and fury resulting from her violent exercise of will is to her credit rather than to her discredit as an artist. She intuitively understands the interdependence of art and life. Her doing so implies a redefinition of both. Art is not just skill, technique, organizational and managerial ability. Life, on the other hand, is not just leaving London, taking off one's stays, and rolling in the grass like the "wild child of nature," Mrs. Manressa. Both definitions are incomplete. Like Richardson's Miriam, Miss LaTrobe discovers that a work of art results from the artist's conscious control as well as from his willingness to abandon himself to the laws, perhaps only dimly intuited, by which a work evolves from within. Whereas Miriam rejects and then admits the need for a minimum of masculine technical facility in order to express in tangible form the patterns inherent in the feminine consciousness, however, Miss LaTrobe rejects and then admits the need for the work of art to develop to some extent according to its own inherent patterns. Because of the difference in emphasis, Miss LaTrobe's work, and a substantial portion of it is included within the novel, ultimately evidences more control.

The title of the novel, "Between the Acts," is related to this theme of the interdependence of art and life. Most critics, whatever additional suggestions they may offer, convincingly associate the title





with the idea of a play-within-a-play.<sup>9</sup> Parodies of Elizabethan, eighteenth-century, and Victorian dramas exist within the pageant itself. The pageant, as a presentation of English civilization from the Elizabethan age to the present, includes the audience; at the same time the pageant is included by the audience. Miss LaTrobe's pageant is part of a larger pageant, that of actual present-day English life which we encounter before, after, and during the intervals of her production. Some members of the audience actually think of themselves as acting in a play of their own, largely as a result of the pageant and of Streatfield's comments afterwards. He says, "we act different parts; but are the same" (BA 224). Pondering his words some members of the audience wonder if they are true and, if so, in whose play they are acting (BA 233). Isa Oliver, taken with the idea, wonders if everyone is confined to a single role in a single play. She imagines Lucy Swithin as the tragic heroine of a different drama (BA 251). Wishing that the love and hate which tear her apart would cease, Isa decides that it is "time someone invented a new plot, or that the author came out from the bushes" (BA 252). Like one of Pirandello's six characters, she is created without her consent and required to live out a hackneyed conflict that she detests by an author who remains in hiding.

Miss LaTrobe, who in the final scene of her pageant holds mirrors before the audience to indicate that they themselves are the actors and actresses in this scene, finds among them her next play. Like Lily Briscoe's painting, Miss LaTrobe's new drama will not be representational. Like Lily and like Orlando, she tries to present the permanent as well as the transient. She strips away the veneer of civilization and reveals midnight and "two figures, half concealed by a rock" (BA 246).



Woolf identifies these two figures with Giles and Isa Oliver, below in Pointz Hall:

Isa let her sewing drop. The great hooded chairs had become enormous. And Giles too. And Isa too against the window. The window was all sky without colour. The house had lost its shelter. It was night before roads were made, or houses. It was the night that dwellers in caves had watched from some high place among rocks.

Then the curtain rose. They spoke (BA 256).

The novel ends, not with the completion of a work of art as does To the Lighthouse, but with the beginning of a new one.

As Miss LaTrobe's new play suggests, the pageant of modern life on-going between the acts is contained within an even larger pageant, the entire history of man and the natural world, the human not just the English historical pageant, and the nonhuman, not just the human pageant. These many pageants reflect each other back and forth like innumerable mirrors. The multiple point-of-view technique, moreover, in which characters reflect each other with varying degrees of distortion is part of this process. Miss LaTrobe's use of mirrors to reflect the audience at the end of her pageant is the culmination of a series of mirror images occurring earlier in the novel. The mirror is associated in various ways with memory and with self-reflection and evaluation (BA 24). Several self-preoccupied or self-satisfied women in the novel examine their faces in mirrors. Mrs. Manressa, for example, repairs her make-up during the presentation of the Age of Reason (BA 158; cf 19-20, 150). When the mirrors are turned on the audience at the end of the pageant, she calmly uses them for the same purpose. Other members of the audience, however, dislike being caught unawares without their carefully assumed masks. To them the mirrors are a "malignant indignity" (BA 217) that causes them to squirm and to shift their eyes.





Miss LaTrobe's art does not reflect people larger than life-size, as Woolf in A Room of One's Own accuses women of doing. It shows them, much to their discomfort, as they are.

If Miss LaTrobe's pageant mirrors the members of the audience, they, in turn, reflect her pageant. The images of the pageant reflected in their minds, however, all are different. Streatfield's oversimplified interpretation is not the only reaction. The audience disperses with contradictory judgments and numerous questions about the overall effect and meaning of the play. Some think it "'brilliantly clever;'" others think it "'utter bosh'" (BA 230). Most consider it uneven and fragmented but point out that not much can be expected from a mere village play (BA 231). Part of Miss LaTrobe's frustration, it is true, is caused by limited funds, incompetent actors, and inadequate props (BA 244; cf 212). Bart Oliver, for one, decides that she tried to accomplish too much with too little (BA 249).

Other characters, however, find such material limitations less important. Lucy Swithin, taking a position recalling Richardson's, supports the playwright and producer who requires the audience to use its imagination (BA 167). Isa Oliver, who cannot follow the involuted plot of one of the plays-within-the-play, partly because Miss LaTrobe has had to cut out a portion to save time, concludes that plot is less important than the emotion it evokes (BA 111). Both Lucy and Isa imply that the audience must contribute something to the production. Miss LaTrobe can control her audience to a certain extent, but she also is dependent upon it, just as she both controls and is dependent upon the natural world. Art, as Orlando says of poetry, is "a voice answering a voice." Miss LaTrobe's pageant is a conversation with the audience



as well as with the natural world.

The audience's side of the conversation to a great extent is interrogative. Some of its members wonder about the presence of the village idiot. Some wonder whether or not Miss LaTrobe intended the interruptions resulting from holding the pageant out of doors. Still others wonder about their wondering: "And if we're left asking questions, isn't it a failure, as a play?" Yet perhaps the author, they think, intended them to be unable to reach well-defined conclusions (BA 233). If the play defies neat summations, it does so to a certain extent in spite of Miss LaTrobe who, with her determination to control and to impose her will on everyone and everything around her, is one of the end products of western civilization. She is critical enough to parody some of its cultural products, but parody in itself does not constitute a positive aesthetic alternative. That the pageant does become, at least in part, such an alternative is because Miss LaTrobe is artist enough to accept gratefully the unanticipated intercessions of the natural world and to learn that a work of art evolves to some extent according to its own inner laws.

To the extent that the drama is a voice answering the voice of her audience, the fact that its members are left asking questions is understandable. The audience, as it plays out its own pageant between the acts largely is uncertain, tense, torn by conflicts and fears. The play answers in the same tone. Yet the questioning itself can be seen as positive. As one member of the audience says, "if we don't jump to conclusions, if you think, and I think, perhaps one day, thinking differently, we shall think the same" (BA 233). Hope resides not in established systems of thought, but in the vital act of thinking. Art does





not illustrate the former but reveals and encourages the latter. The goal is the inclusive perspective that Woolf's characters attain only at moments. Her emphasis, as indeterminate titles like To the Lighthouse and Between the Acts indicate, is less on the attainment than on the everyday entanglements that constitute life.

Woolf examines the situations of the female artist in an ever-widening context. She begins with Lily Briscoe among the middle-class intelligentsia in early twentieth-century England. In Orlando, she places Lily's problems in the larger context of the history of English civilization. She places the history of English civilization in Between the Acts among the people of twentieth-century England between the two world wars and those people in the still larger context of all human and natural history. Woolf's work as a whole, therefore, becomes increasingly inclusive. The permanence she and her characters glimpse within change does not suggest, however, as it does in the cases of Sinclair's and Richardson's work, any belief in the ability of the individual consciousness to perceive an ultimate consciousness which contains it or a spiritual realm which encompasses and shines through this material one. The permanence perceived in Woolf's work suggests, instead, a broadened, more inclusive perspective on life in this world. The origins or manifestations of the marvellous fact of life itself are neither explainable nor a topic of speculation. The lapses of egoism that result from moments of broadened perspective may bring either relief, as they do to Miss LaTrobe as well as to Mrs. Ramsay, or panic, as they do to some of the characters in The Waves. They do not bring the kind of spiritual certainty or belief that one senses in Sinclair and Richardson.





#### IV. CONCLUSION

"'The modern Pilgrim's Progress would read strangely and significantly with woman as the pilgrim! But the end-- that would be a difficulty.'"

Mona Caird, The Daughters of Danaus (1894)

The female artist as Sinclair, Richardson, and Woolf present her confronts a dilemma. To say she wants "to have her cake and eat it too" is inaccurate. The cliché suggests that what she asks is impossible and a bit silly besides. Like a number of their predecessors, all three women are convinced that what the female artist asks is neither impossible nor even unreasonable. To want to be treated, not as one of a group of reproducers, but as an individual capable of channeling her energies in a wide variety of directions, perhaps more than one at the same time, is to them more than reasonable. It is essential for their own fulfillment; moreover, it is beneficial to the larger society and to art, both of which need an infusion of women's values. Before a female artist can function as woman and as artist, however, society must redefine those roles so that they are no longer mutually exclusive. Before she can express women's values in art, she must challenge certain artistic conventions.

Sinclair, Richardson, and Woolf frequently examine the female artist's dilemma in the context of her inner life. There her own sense of herself offsets society's definition of her as inferior. There she is more likely to be taken seriously as an artist. Even in that context, however, she is not safe, as the emphasis of Woolf in particular on inner inhibiting factors resulting from a hostile environment shows. Woolf describes in her essays and dramatizes especially in To



the Lighthouse what has come to be known among educational and social psychologists as the "self-fulfilling prophecy." According to Robert Merton, "the self-fulfilling prophecy is, in the beginning a false definition of the situation evoking a new behavior which makes the originally false conception come true. The specious validity of the self-fulfilling prophecy perpetuates a reign of error. For the prophet will cite the actual course of events as proof that he was right from the very beginning."<sup>1</sup> In other words, the female artist is told that she cannot produce significant art. Because she believes she cannot, she does not. The fact that she does not is used as evidence to support the contention that she cannot. In such a context she is damned if she commits herself to art because she flies in the face of the proven fact that she cannot do anything worthwhile. If by some miracle she does do something worthwhile, she is damned as an unnatural creature more man than woman. On the other hand, if she continues to produce the inferior art expected of her, she continues to be damned as a creature of inferior intellectual and artistic capability.<sup>2</sup>

The emphasis on the "reign of error" and the inhibiting psychological state that is its result dominates commentaries on the situation of female artists and career women in general that have emerged in more recent decades. Simone de Beauvoir's chapter in The Second Sex (1949) on "The Independent Woman," for example, describes in detail the inner upheaval with which such a woman copes. She wastes time and misdirects her energy in youth; oscillation among several contradictory roles results in a diffusion of energy; failure or fear of failure in one role leads to over-compensation in others; and recurrent self-doubts as well as thoughts of giving up necessitate continual reaffirmations of





intention.<sup>3</sup> Western society still assumes that women who deviate from the traditional feminine role of wife and mother are inferior at what they do until they prove themselves otherwise. To win the right to be treated as equals in professions dominated by men, they often must perform not merely in the same but in a superior manner.

Women confronted with this struggle frequently devise ways to protect themselves from some of the psychological suffering involved. Sinclair, consistently, Woolf and Richardson usually, are free of the "sour grapes" view that if they cannot do successfully what men do, it is not worth doing. All three ultimately operate within a larger metaphysical perspective. Consequently, they remain unaware of some implications of their insistence that women bring their own values both into the larger society and into art. To emphasize the centrality of the individual consciousness is one thing; to insist that such an emphasis is peculiarly feminine is another. Unjustifiably devalued qualities no doubt deserve a disproportionate amount of attention until awareness of them increases. The redefinition as strengths of what society presently considers weaknesses, however, does not contribute to the attainment of individual or social androgeneity if it leads to a corresponding redefinition as weaknesses of what society considers strengths. Women and women artists, in other words, do little to improve their situation when they claim a monopoly on certain devalued characteristics, define them as superior, and dismiss men and their accomplishments as inferior or even malign. Rejecting generalizations about women as bodies, they counter with equally limited generalizations about men as brains. The result is an anti-intellectualism that benefits nobody.

Moreover, the emphasis on women's values and women's art can be



construed, in part, as a self-protective stance either designed to placate potentially-hostile men resentful of competition or to limit women's competition to other women. To be an outstanding woman artist seems easier than to be an outstanding artist. Such an attitude perpetuates rather than eliminates the double standard according to which the accomplishments of the sexes are valued. So long as women insist that their work be considered separately, whether according to a superior or an inferior set of standards, the latter, because tradition is strong, very likely will prevail. To the extent that it does, women will be encouraged to aspire no further and will have trapped themselves once again in a situation very like the one the woman's movement set out to alleviate.

The temptation to protect oneself is not peculiar to women artists. Nor is it entirely reprehensible. While it may not encourage high standards, it is the impetus for a large amount of diverse artistic activity within groups treated with condescension in various places at various times for various reasons. The encouragement of such activity among increasing numbers of people within those groups is a necessary preliminary to the outstanding achievement of a few. These few ultimately transcend sex, race, social class, ethnic group, religion, geographical region, or nationality, not by losing their consciousness of it but by using it to particularize what in the human condition is universal. In fact, transcendence may be attained when the artist perceives that the tendency to define oneself and others like one in opposition to some other group is universal.

Examples of artists who confront formidable artistic traditions established by a dominant yet for some reason alien group are numerous.





In the nineteenth century, some United States thinkers and artists asserted their self-reliance against English traditions. In the United States itself, many writers in the South eventually stopped writing to please Northern publishers and readers. Canadian artists increasingly are vocal about a heritage that differentiates them from both England and the United States, and French-Canadian artists about a heritage that differentiates them from the rest of Canada. Black artists reject the conventions of the white establishment. A good illustration of the latter is Willie Spearmint, the black writer in Bernard Malamud's The Tenants (1971). Just as Richardson's Miriam insists that everything has a different meaning to men and women, so Willie insists that everything has a different meaning to whites and blacks. Just as women's fiction must be correspondingly different from men's so black fiction, Willie insists, must be different from white. To give the black experience expression, however, he is willing to learn from Lesser, a white writer, a minimum of literary "know-how", just as Miriam is willing to put masculine talent to work to give expression to the feminine consciousness. Like Miriam, too, Willie presents the black experience from the inside, attempting to redefine it in a way more meaningful than the larger society has done.

Comparisons of the situations of women and blacks are common and often invalid. A comparison of the problems of the female artist to those of the black artist usually minimizes hers. The female artist's problems and the women's movement in general exist largely within the white middle-class. Beside the difficulties of the working classes and the unemployed during the same period, as suggested in novels like Upton Sinclair's The Jungle (1906), they seem less significant. Perhaps





one reason why the fictional techniques developed to communicate the inner life have been combined in subsequent decades with earlier techniques or have been abandoned altogether is because they are associated with the presentation of middle-class life by writers who can afford the luxury of introspection.<sup>4</sup> Social problems oppressing other groups of people may be suggested in such novels. Because the reader is confined to the consciousness of one or more middle-class characters, however, the impact of such problems is not likely to be great. To insist that the impact be great, of course, is to insist that external circumstances are decisive and to minimize the centrality of the individual consciousness. Indeed, the value system dominant when Sinclair, Richardson, and Woolf wrote is dominant still.

The fact that by the year of her death, 1941, Woolf saw the situation of the female artist in a much broader context does not mean that the situation had improved markedly. Nor had it improved by the time Sinclair, after not having published anything for two decades, died in 1946, nor even by the time Richardson died in 1957. The female artist's dilemma remains much the same. In the middle decades of this century certain external obstructions to her development no longer exist, but western society's attitude toward woman's proper sphere has not changed sufficiently to benefit her self-confidence should she deviate. Women in the visual arts, for example, even when they have ability equal or superior to their male contemporaries, are not encouraged to take themselves seriously as artists. Nor do they have the same chances as young men to get into graduate programs in art, or to get teaching appointments and grants. Little wonder that, when these factors are combined with their socialization for the role of wife and mother, women exhibit less



commitment than men of equal ability.<sup>5</sup> Little wonder, too, that the great women artists whose emergence is to depend upon a change in attitude toward woman's role have yet to materialize.

If they have materialized, they have yet to gain recognition. Male domination of art criticism and of the selling and buying of art works is as much a factor as is male domination of artistic production. Evidence increasingly emerges to indicate that some women artists, particularly in the visual arts, whose works equal and occasionally surpass those of widely-known male artists always have existed and continue to exist. These women's works have been unsigned, attributed to some man, or, more recently, simply ignored.<sup>6</sup> Dealers and museums tend not to accept women's work. Art historians and critics give them little attention. Women who want the artistic ability of their sex acknowledged can achieve more by becoming competent art historians and critics than by becoming artists. Such an effort is underway in literary criticism. The works of certain female writers deserve re-evaluation; nevertheless, one would not want to devote all of one's life to the cause.





## NOTES

### I. Introduction

<sup>1</sup>For a more comprehensive discussion of the women's movement, see Ray Strachey, The Cause: A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain (London, 1928).

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, Patricia Thomson, The Victorian Heroine: A Changing Ideal: 1837-1873 (London, 1956); Katharine S. Harris, "The New Woman in the Literature of the 1890's: Four Critical Approaches," unpubl. diss. (Columbia, 1963); M. Esme Hunte, "The New Woman: 1860-1920," unpubl. thesis (Dalhousie, 1963).

<sup>3</sup>See, for example, Joseph Warren Beach, The Twentieth Century Novel: Studies in Technique (New York, 1932); Babette Deutsch, "Imagism in Fiction," Nation, CVI (June 1918), 656; Randolph Bourne, "An Imagist Novel," The Dial, LXIV-LXV (1918), 451-452; William A. Harms, "Impressionism as a Literary Style," unpubl. diss. (Indiana, 1971).

<sup>4</sup>See, for example, J. K. Johnstone, "Bloomsbury Aesthetics," The Bloomsbury Group (New York, 1954); Keith May, "The Symbol of Painting in 'To the Lighthouse,'" Review of English Literature, VIII (1967), 91-98; Sharon Proudfit, "Lily Briscoe's Painting: A Key to Personal Relationships in To the Lighthouse," Criticism, XIII (Winter 1971), 26-38; Allen McLaurin, Virginia Woolf: The Echoes Enslaved (Cambridge, 1973).

<sup>5</sup>See Frederick J. Hoffman, "Forms of Experiment and Improvisation," The Twenties: American Writing in the Postwar Decade, rev. ed. (New York, 1962); Robert H. Ross, The Georgian Revolt, Rise and Fall of a Poetic Ideal: 1910-1922 (Carbondale, 1965); A. C. Ward, The Nineteen-Twenties: Literature and Ideas in the Post-War Decade, 2nd ed. (London, 1933).

<sup>6</sup>"Our Vortex," Blast, I-II (1914-15), 151-152.

### II. A. Biology or Environment: Two Views of the Female Artist

<sup>1</sup>See Appendices I and II.

<sup>2</sup>Among the relatively few longer studies of artist-characters in fiction, see especially Maurice Beebe, Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts (New York, 1970). See also T. R. Bowie, The Painter in French Fiction (Chapel Hill, 1950); Van Wyck Brooks, "The Artist as Hero," Sketches in Criticism (New York, 1932), pp. 93-99; Ralph Stokes Collins, The Artist in Modern German Drama (Baltimore, 1940); Gerald Jay Goldberg, "The Artist-Novel in Transition," English Fiction in Transition,



IV, 3 (1961), 12-27; Philip Gilbert Hammerton, "Artists in Fiction," Thoughts About Art (Boston, 1880), pp. 101-124; Frank Kermode, "The Artist in Isolation," Romantic Image (New York, 1957); Charles McCann, Eric Solomon, Sister Mary Bernetta Quinn, Lionel Stevenson, and James G. Kennedy, "Forum: The Conference on the Artist-Hero Novel," English Fiction in Transition, V, 1 (1962), 27-34; Maurice Shroder, Icarus: The Image of the Artist in French Romanticism (Cambridge, 1961); James M. Wells, "The Artist in the English Novel, 1850-1919," Philological Studies (West Virginia University), IV (September 1943), 77-80.

One critic who does give special attention to the female artist-character is George C. Schoolfield, The Figure of the Musician in German Literature (Chapel Hill, 1956).

<sup>3</sup>See, for example, Hazel Mews, "Women Standing Alone," Frail Vessels: Woman's Role in Women's Novels From Fanny Burney to George Eliot (London, 1969), pp. 173-193; Patricia Thomson, "Woman at Work," The Victorian Heroine: A Changing Ideal: 1837-1873 (London, 1956), pp. 74-85.

<sup>4</sup>See Jill Conway, "Stereotypes of Femininity in a Theory of Sexual Evolution," Victorian Studies, XIV (1970), 47-62. See also Mary Ellmann, Thinking About Women (New York, 1968); Willa Muir, Women: An Inquiry (London, 1925); Kate Millett, "The Reaction in Ideology," Sexual Politics (Garden City, New York, 1970), pp. 176-233. Among the psychologists and amateur psychologists, see Sigmund Freud, Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex, trans. A. A. Brill (New York, 1962; first published in translation, 1910); Carl G. Jung, "The Relations Between the Ego and the Unconscious," The Basic Writings of C. G. Jung, ed. Violet de Laszlo (New York, 1959), pp. 158-181; D. H. Lawrence, Fantasia of the Unconscious and Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious (London, 1961).

<sup>5</sup>George Henry Lewes, "The Lady Novelists," Westminster Review, LVIII (July 1852), 129f; John Crowe Ransom, "The Poet as Woman," The World's Body (New York and London, 1938), pp. 76-110.

<sup>6</sup>"Music, Painting, and Poetry," Daughters of England, Their Position in Society, Character, and Responsibilities (London, 1843), pp. 106-140.

<sup>7</sup>See Clemence Dane, "The Feminine of Genius," The Woman's Side (New York, 1927), pp. 161-171; Lawrence Gilman, "Women and Modern Music," Phases of Modern Music (Freeport, New York, 1968; first published, 1904), pp. 93-101; J. G. Huneker, "The Eternal Feminine," Overtones: A Book of Temperaments (New York, 1912), pp. 277-306; Eloise Spaeth, "Woman in the Arts," The Spiritual Woman: Trustee of the Future, ed. Marion T. Sheehan (New York, 1955), pp. 1-11.

<sup>8</sup>"Sex in Art," Modern Painting, The Collected Works of George Moore (New York, 1923), XIX, 191.

<sup>9</sup>Evelyn Innes (1898), The Collected Works of George Moore, VI, 179.





- <sup>10</sup> See Ann D. Wood, "The Scribbling Women and Fanny Fern: Why Women Wrote," American Quarterly, XXIII, 1 (Spring 1971), 3-24.
- <sup>11</sup> The Half-Sisters, 8th ed. (London, 1866), p. 162.
- <sup>12</sup> See B. G. MacCarthy, Women Writers: Their Contribution to the English Novel: 1621-1744 (Oxford, 1945), p. 42.
- <sup>13</sup> On the subject of the single woman in literature, see Dorothy Y. Deegan, The Stereotype of the Single Woman in American Novels (New York, 1951).
- <sup>14</sup> Agnes DeMille, "The Milk of Paradise," American Women: The Changing Image, ed. Beverly Benner Cassara (Boston, 1962), pp. 124-141. Women sculptors in nineteenth-century America also had less difficulty because no lengthy tradition of American sculpture preceded them and because the demand for monuments was so great. See Margaret F. Thorp, "White, Marmorean Flock," New England Quarterly, XXXII (June 1959), 147-169.
- <sup>15</sup> See Dame Ethel Smyth, "A Burning of Boats," London Mercury, IX (1924), 383-393; Winifred Holtby, Women and a Changing Civilization (London, 1934), p. 96; Joyce M. Horner, The English Women Novelists and Their Connection with the Feminist Movement (1688-1797) (Northampton, Mass., 1929-1930), p. 3.
- <sup>16</sup> The Brontës wrote under male pseudonyms for this and other reasons. See Inga-Stina Eubank, "The Woman Writer," Their Proper Sphere: A Study of the Brontë Sisters as Early-Victorian Female Novelists (Cambridge, Mass., 1966), pp. 1-47.
- <sup>17</sup> See Lawrence Gilman, "Women and Modern Music," Phases of Modern Music (Freeport, New York, 1968; first published, 1904), pp. 94-5; George T. Ladd, "Why Women Cannot Compose Music," Yale Review, n. s. VI (July 1917), 801-803.
- <sup>18</sup> See Brander Matthews, "Women Dramatists," A Book About the Theatre (New York, 1916), pp. 119-122; Joseph Mersand, "When Ladies Write Plays," American Drama: 1830-40 (New York, 1941), p. 153; George Jean Nathan, "The Status of the Female Playwrights," Entertainment of a Nation: or Three-Sheets in the Wind (New York, 1942), pp. 34-6; "Women Playwrights--A Symposium," Books Abroad, XXII, 1 (1948), 16-21.
- <sup>19</sup> See Moore, "Sex in Art;" Jan Gordon, "The Women Painters," Modern French Painters (London, 1929; first published, 1923), 161-166; Clive Bell, "The Feminine Touch," New Statesman and Nation, XI, January 18, 1936, 82.
- <sup>20</sup> W. L. George, "Woman and the Paint Pot," The Intelligence of Woman (Boston, 1920), p. 126.





<sup>21</sup> See Henry S. Canby, "The Feminine Touch in Literature," American Estimates (New York, 1929), p. 213; Ashley H. Thorndike, "Woman," Literature in a Changing Age (Freeport, New York, 1969; first published, 1920), p. 195.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Herbert J. Muller, "Virginia Woolf, and Feminine Fiction," Modern Fiction: A Study of Values (New York, 1937), p. 326.

<sup>23</sup> See Elizabeth D. Pendry, The New Feminism of English Fiction: A Study in Contemporary Women Novelists (Tokyo, 1956), pp. 22-23.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Lionel Stevenson, The English Novel: A Panorama (Boston, 1960) on Fanny Burney, Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, and George Eliot; and Walter Allen, The English Novel: A Short Critical History (New York, 1954), on Mrs. Charlotte Smith, Anne Radcliffe, and Maria Edgeworth.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, William L. Courtney, The Feminine Note in Fiction (London, 1904), pp. xxvii-xxxiii; Harry T. Levin, "Janes and Emilies, or the Novelist as Heroine," Refractions (New York, 1966), p. 263.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Marjory A. Bald, Women-Writers of the Nineteenth Century (New York, 1963), p. 277; B. G. MacCarthy, Women Writers: Their Contribution to the English Novel: 1621-1744 (Oxford, 1945), p. 40.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding (Berkeley, 1957), especially his chapters on Richardson and Fielding as well as his comment on Jane Austen; see also Stevenson, The English Novel, pp. 28, 118, 309-310.

<sup>28</sup> See Vera Brittain, "Women Writers and the Woman's Movement," Lady into Woman: A History of Women From Victoria to Elizabeth II (London, 1953), pp. 211-213; Lionel Stevenson, "A Group of Able Dames," The History of the English Novel (New York, 1967), pp. 254-253, 297; Horner, The English Women Novelists; and Pendry, The New Feminism of English Fiction.

<sup>29</sup> Vindication of the Rights of Women (London, 1792).

<sup>30</sup> Corinne: Or Italy, trans. Emily Baldwin and Paulina Driver (London, 1911), p. 247.

<sup>31</sup> See Roderick Marshall, Italy in English Literature, 1755-1815: Origins of the Romantic Interest in Italy (New York, 1934).

<sup>32</sup> See Robert C. Whitford, Madame de Staël's Literary Reputation in England, University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, IV, 1 (February 1918), 16-19. Not all female artists or their female characters and artist-characters identified with Corinne's artistic triumphs. The authorial persona of Mrs. Craik, in Olive: A Novel (New York, n. d.; first published, 1850), states that "there scarce ever lived the woman who would not rather sit meekly by her own hearth, with her husband at her side, and her children at her knees,



than be crowned Corinne of the Capitol" (p. 54). Eliot's Maggie Tulliver in The Mill on the Floss (1860) does not want to be like Corinne because she perceives that the dark-haired heroine, with whom she identifies, will lose her lover to a light-haired woman, as in so many other novels (Vol. II, Bk. 5, Ch. 4). In James's Roderick Hudson (1875) Mary Garland reads Corinne to Mrs. Hudson. The comments of neither are recorded. In The Bostonians (1886) Basil Ransom calls Verena, who speaks for the woman's movement, a New England version of Corinne more interested in a cause than in art.

<sup>33</sup>Florence Nightingale, "Cassandra" (written, 1852; privately printed, 1859); included as Appendix I in Ray Strachey, The Cause: A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain (London, 1928), p. 399.

<sup>34</sup>J. S. Mill, The Subjection of Women (London, 1869), pp. 126-141.

<sup>35</sup>See Margaret Collyer, Life of an Artist (London, 1935), pp. 79-82; Linda Nochlin, "Why Are There No Great Women Artists?" Woman in Sexist Society, ed. Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran (New York and London, 1961), p. 354; Strachey, The Cause, pp. 93, 96; Thorp, "White, Mar-morean Flock," 147-148.

<sup>36</sup>Aurora Leigh (London, 1859), p. 183.

<sup>37</sup>See Madelyn Gutwirth, "Madame de Staël, Rousseau, and the Woman Question," PMLA, LXXXVI (January 1971), 100-109.

<sup>38</sup>Susanne Howe, Wilhelm Meister and His English Kinsmen: Apprentices to Life (New York, 1930), p. 250, thinks that Bianca's renunciation is a concession by Jewsbury to her readers.

<sup>39</sup>"Is There a 'Feminine' Fiction?" The Modern Novel: Some Aspects of Contemporary Fiction (London, 1926), pp. 103-104; see also Mary Ellmann, Thinking About Women (New York, 1968), pp. 160, 169, 173. Louis Auchincloss's thesis in Pioneers and Caretakers: A Study of Nine American Women Novelists (New York, 1961) that women writers are more affirmative than men is so general as to have almost no validity. His own discussions of writers like Katherine Anne Porter, Carson McCullers, and others negate it. He does not consider Flannery O'Connor, nor does he indicate whether or not his thesis might apply to nonAmerican women writers like Doris Lessing and Iris Murdoch.

<sup>40</sup>Nochlin, "Why Are There No Great Women Artists?" p. 345.

<sup>41</sup>Edith Kern, "Author or Authoress?" Yale French Studies, XXVII (1961), 5.





## II. B. Virginia Woolf: Suffragette or Artist

<sup>1</sup>See Mary Kelsey, "Virginia Woolf and the She-Condition," Sewanee Review, XXXIX (1931), 425; E. D. Pendry, "Feminism, Fiction and Virginia Woolf," The New Feminism of English Fiction: A Study in Contemporary Women-Novelists (Tokyo, 1956), p. 27; Herbert Marder, Feminism and Art: A Study of Virginia Woolf (Chicago and London, 1968), pp. 86, 92.

<sup>2</sup>All references to the following editions of Virginia Woolf's works will be abbreviated and documented parenthetically in the text: VO The Voyage Out (London, 1929; first published, 1915); ND Night and Day (London, 1919); JR Jacob's Room (London, 1929; first published, 1922); MD Mrs. Dalloway (New York, 1925); L To the Lighthouse (London, 1927); AROO A Room of One's Own (London, 1929); TG Three Guineas (London, 1938); WD A Writer's Diary: Being Extracts From the Diary of Virginia Woolf, ed. Leonard Woolf (London, 1953); CW Contemporary Writers (London, 1965); CE Collected Essays, 4 vols. (London, 1966).

<sup>3</sup>Vera Brittain, Testament of Friendship: The Story of Winifred Holtby (London, 1941), p. 114, quotes Holtby as writing in the Yorkshire Post: "'I am a feminist...because I dislike everything that feminism implies; I desire an end of the whole business, the demands for equality, the suggestions of sex warfare, the very name of feminist.'" Holtby wants "a society in which men and women work together for the good of all mankind," in which respect for the human being is more important than sex differences.

<sup>4</sup>Cicely Hamilton, "The Need for Imagination in Women," English Review, XXXII (1921), 40-46, also suggests that women are not inherently pacifists, that once they are swept into the vortex of crowd life, they will behave as violently, egotistically, and malevolently as men. She uses the militant suffrage movement as an example.

<sup>5</sup>See J. B. Batchelor, "Feminism in Virginia Woolf," Virginia Woolf: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Claire Sprague (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1971), p. 173.

<sup>6</sup>Leonard Woolf, Downhill All the Way: An Autobiography of the Years 1919-1939 (London, 1967), p. 27.

<sup>7</sup>Winifred Holtby, Virginia Woolf (London, 1932), pp. 27-28.

<sup>8</sup>Jean Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Works, trans. Jean Stewart (London, 1965) explores the parallel between Virginia Woolf and Antigone (pp. 419, 464). She stresses Woolf's commitment to contemporary issues. So does John F. Hulcoop, "Virginia Woolf's Diaries: Some Reflections After Reading Them and a Censure of Mr. Holroyd," Bulletin of the New York Public Library, LXXV, 7 (September, 1971), 308.



<sup>9</sup>Marder, Feminism and Art, also associates Woolf the feminist with Woolf the artist and social responsibility with art. See especially pp. 156, 167, 175.

## II. C. Dorothy Richardson: Victim or Victor

<sup>1</sup>"Data for Spanish Publisher," ed. Joseph Prescott, The London Magazine, VI, 6 (June 1959), 19.

<sup>2</sup>A number of critics read Pilgrimage as little more than the product of a feminist historical period. See, for example, Conrad Aiken, A Reviewer's ABC (New York, 1935), pp. 329-331. Others see the historical accuracy as valuable, although perhaps as dating the novel. See, for example, Horace Gregory, "An Adventure in Self-Discovery," Adam: International Review, XXXI (1966), 46; Walter Allen, "Introduction" to the 1967 Dent edition of Pilgrimage, pp. 6, 8; Winifred Bryher, "D. R.," Adam: International Review, XXXI (1966), 22-23; Ellen Fitzgerald, "Dorothy M. Richardson," Life and Letters Today, XVII, 10 (Winter 1937), 37-39. Critics aware of the larger social, metaphysical, and aesthetic implications contained in Richardson's treatment of feminism and male-female relationships in general are Caesar Blake, Dorothy Richardson (Ann Arbor, 1960), pp. 39, 80-81; Babette Deutsch, "Adventure in Awareness," Nation, February 18, 1939, 210; and Shirley Rose, "The Social and Aesthetic Views of Dorothy M. Richardson," unpubl. diss. (London, 1967).

<sup>3</sup>All references to Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage are to the four-volume J. W. Dent edition (London, 1967) and will be documented parenthetically in the text according to volume, abbreviated title of section, and page: PR Pointed Roofs (1915); Bw Backwater (1916); Hc Honeycomb (1917); Tun The Tunnel (1919); Int Interim (1919); D1 Deadlock (1921); RL Revolving Lights (1923); Trap The Trap (1925); O Oberland (1927); DLH Dawn's Left Hand (1931); CH Clear Horizon (1935); DH Dimple Hill (published with the first collected edition in 1938); MM March Moonlight (an uncompleted final part published with the Dent republication of the collected edition in 1967).

<sup>4</sup>"The Reality of Feminism," The Ploughshare, n. s. II, 8 (September 1917), 246.

<sup>5</sup>"Data for Spanish Publisher," 17-18.

<sup>6</sup>See "The Reality of Feminism," 242-243; "Letter to the Odd Man," Ye Crank and The Open Road, V, 3 (March 1907), 147-8; "Notes about a book purporting to be about Christianity and Socialism," Ye Crank and The Open Road, V, 6 (June 1907), 314. See also Shirley Rose, "The Social and Aesthetic Views of Dorothy M. Richardson."

<sup>7</sup>"Talent and Genius: Is not Genius Actually Far More Common Than Talent?" Vanity Fair (NY), XXI, 2 (October 1923), 120.





<sup>8</sup>Quakers Past and Present (London, 1914), pp. 72, 75-80. Richardson's Pilgrimage, the title of which suggests a spiritual dimension, demonstrates the spiritual equality, even superiority of women. It is a Pilgrim's Progress with woman as protagonist. Appropriately, that woman's name is Miriam. While the name recalls Hawthorne's Miriam in The Marble Faun and James's Miriam in The Tragic Muse, both artists, it also recalls the sister of Moses and Aaron, the prophetess of the Old Testament who praises God with timbrel and song (Exodus 15: 20-21). Olive Schreiner, who in Woman and Labor (New York, 1911) traces the decline of various nations and groups to the reduction of women to passive sexual functions, contrasts the strong Jewish women of the days when the Jews were strong and mentions "Miriam, prophetess and singer" (p. 94). When Miriam and Aaron speak against Moses and claim themselves equal recipients of God's word, God reveals his anger to both, but he punishes only Miriam for her presumption. He makes her a leper but, because Moses pleads for her, banishes her from the camp for only seven days (Numbers 12: 1-2). Pilgrimage is, in part, an attempt to present the situation from Miriam's point of view. Both Richardson and her character, Miriam, see the God who assumes a position of authority and, angry, jealous, and egoistic, passes judgment upon humanity, as a male creation (See "Data for Spanish Publisher," 18; II Tun 93-4; III RL 323, 328). Both see God and humanity as inseparable. That Miriam has the name of a woman who questioned the authority of the patriarchal God as well as her own inferiority is important. And, like the Miriam of the Old Testament, Miriam Henderson's presumption makes her something of a social outcast.

<sup>9</sup>"Women and the Future; A Trembling of the Veil Before the Eternal Mystery of 'La Gioconda,'" Vanity Fair (NY), XXII, 2 (April 1924), 40.

## II. D. May Sinclair: The New Normality

<sup>1</sup>"How It Strikes a Mere Novelist," Votes for Women, December 24, 1908, p. 211. Sinclair's interest in the suffrage movement also is indicated by two letters to the editor of the London Times, April 4, 1912, p. 7 and June 19, 1912, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>"Message," Votes for Women, March 1, 1908, p. 79.

<sup>3</sup>All references to May Sinclair's works are to the following editions and will be documented parenthetically, according to the following abbreviations, in the text: AC Audrey Craven (London, 1897); S Superseded (New York, 1906; first published, 1901); C The Creators (New York, 1910); TH The Tree of Heaven (New York, 1918; first published, 1917); AW Arnold Waterlow: A Life (New York, 1924); RP The Return of the Prodigal and Other Stories (New York, 1914); F Feminism (London, 1912); 3B The Three Brontës (Port Washington, New York, 1967; first published, 1912).

<sup>4</sup>"A Defence of Men," English Review, XI (July 1912), 558-560. This essay also appeared in Forum, XLVIII (October 1912), 409-420.





- <sup>5</sup>Ibid., 559-561.
- <sup>6</sup>Ibid., 562.
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid., 564.
- <sup>8</sup>"Introduction," The Tenant of Wildfell Hall (London, 1914), p. x.
- <sup>9</sup>Sinclair credits Charlotte Brontë with proving in Shirley that "there are other things" for women, things like "social upheavals, the clash of sects and castes, the first grim hand-to-hand struggle between capital and labor" (3B 148).
- <sup>10</sup>See also "Psychological Types," English Review, XXXVI (May 1923), 436-439.
- <sup>11</sup>"Clinical Lecture on Symbolism and Sublimation," The Medical Press, Part I, August 9, 1916, pp. 118-122; Part II, August 16, 1916, pp. 142-145.
- <sup>12</sup>Ibid., I, 122, footnote 5.
- <sup>13</sup>Ibid., I, 119-120.
- <sup>14</sup>Ibid., II, 143. Richardson, in her discussion of Wordsworth's creative process in "Adventure for Readers," Life and Letters, XXII (July 1939), 45, reaches a similar conclusion when she talks of the "effusions" which are inspired by the poet's own effusions.
- <sup>15</sup>"Clinical Lecture," II, 44.
- <sup>16</sup>The Tysons (Mr. and Mrs. Nevill Tyson) (New York, 1906), p. 26.
- <sup>17</sup>Sinclair describes the situations of such women in her comments on Charlotte Brontë's Shirley (3B 149-150).

II. E. "Can't Paint, Can't Write:  
Virginia Woolf's Lily Briscoe and Orlando

- <sup>1</sup>Virginia Stephen, "Street Music," National and English Review, XLV (1905), 145.
- <sup>2</sup>The Voyage Out (London, 1929), p. 266. All references to the following London editions of Woolf's works will be abbreviated and documented parenthetically in the text: L To the Lighthouse (1927); O Orlando (1928); AROO A Room of One's Own (1929); TG Three Guineas (1938); CE Collected Essays, 4 vols. (1966); WD A Writer's Diary, ed. Leonard Woolf (1953).
- <sup>3</sup>"The Intellectual Status of Women," The New Statesman, XVI, October 9, 1920, 15 and XVI, October 16, 1920, 45-46.



<sup>4</sup>"Women and Leisure," Nation and Athenaeum, November 16, 1929, p. 248. See also Lyn Irvine, "Virginia Woolf Upon Women," Nation and Athenaeum, November 9, 1929, pp. 201-203; and January 4, 1930, p. 481; Frances M. Orr, "Virginia Woolf Upon Women," Nation and Athenaeum, December 28, 1929, p. 456.

<sup>5</sup>Bernard Blackstone, Virginia Woolf: A Commentary (New York, 1949), p. 110, for example, finds significance in the fact that Woolf "makes her chief commentator a painter, even if a bad painter." Josephine Schaefer, The Three-Fold Nature of Reality in the Novels of Virginia Woolf (London, 1965), pp. 133-134, agrees that Lily is not to be taken seriously as an artist, however important her reveries might be to the novel.

<sup>6</sup>Sharon Wood Proudfit, "Lily Briscoe's Painting: A Key to Personal Relationships in To the Lighthouse," Criticism, XIII, 1 (Winter 1921), 26-38, is an example of the former. Herbert Marder, Feminism and Art: A Study of Virginia Woolf (Chicago, 1968), is an example of the latter.

<sup>7</sup>Virginia Woolf's Lighthouse: A Study in Critical Method (New York, 1970), pp. 43, 95ff. Ruth Z. Temple, "Three Approaches to Virginia Woolf," Journal of Modern Literature, II, 3 (1971-1972), 422, questions the inclusion of this much-reiterated material; however, the proliferation of misguided commentary on To the Lighthouse seems to warrant the spelling out of overlooked essentials. Among other critics who give some attention to point of view in To the Lighthouse are Erich Auerbach, "The Brown Stocking," Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, N. J., 1953); J. K. Johnstone, The Bloomsbury Group: A Study of E. M. Forster, Lytton Strachey, Virginia Woolf, and Their Circle (New York, 1954); Harvena Richter, Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage (Princeton, 1970).

<sup>8</sup>See Avrom Fleishman, "Woolf and McTaggart," ELH, XXXVI (December 1969), 719-738.

<sup>9</sup>Marder, Feminism and Art, p. 128; H. K. Russell, "Woolf's To the Lighthouse," Explicator, VIII (1950), Item 38; and D. S. Savage, The Withered Branch: Six Studies in the Modern Novel (London, 1950), p. 88 all see Lily as inferior in some way to Mrs. Ramsay.

<sup>10</sup>Uncritically positive readings of Mrs. Ramsay appear in books and articles too numerous to list. Such readings take several easily-defined forms. To many critics, Mrs. Ramsay is a glorious archetypal figure, a feminine principle characterized by intuition, emotion, beauty, fertility, nourishment, harmony, and order. Some of the critics who favor archetypal readings associate her with specific Biblical or classical prototypes. Other critics isolate Mrs. Ramsay's ability to create harmony and order and treat her as an aesthetic principle, an "artist in life." Some of these assume that she creates wholeness and harmony out of the wholeness and harmony which characterize her personality.





<sup>11</sup> Several critics have observed faults in Mrs. Ramsay. See, for example, Winifred Holtby, Virginia Woolf (London, 1932), p. 155; Norman Friedman, "The Waters of Annihilation: Double Vision in To the Lighthouse," Virginia Woolf: To the Lighthouse, ed. Morris Beja (London, 1970), p. 151; Josephine Schaefer, The Three-Fold Nature of Reality in the Novels of Virginia Woolf (London, 1965), p. 123; Mitchell Leaska, Virginia Woolf's Lighthouse, pp. 66-76. Those who deal with her faults in any detail, however, tend to reduce her to a malevolent force and are just as mistaken as those who exalt her into a goddess. To both Glenn Pedersen, "Vision in To the Lighthouse," PMLA, LXXIII (December 1958), 585-600 and Sharon Wood Proudfit, "Lily Briscoe's Painting," the novel shows the other characters breaking free of Mrs. Ramsay's suffocating domination before they can function adequately. Proudfit is especially concerned with Lily Briscoe's struggle to fulfill herself as an artist.

<sup>12</sup> None of the characters, either aloud or in their thoughts, refer to Mr. or Mrs. Ramsay by their first names or even by their full names. They are a legally-united pair sharing his surname. Its constant usage is surrounded by a formality which seems more characteristic of a previous age.

<sup>13</sup> Virginia Woolf (London, 1932), p. 29.

<sup>14</sup> Women and a Changing Civilisation (London, 1934), pp. 238-9.

<sup>15</sup> Critics also tend to dismiss Lily as a spinster or an old maid, or to associate art for a woman inevitably with spinsterhood. See, for example, Norman Friedman, "The Waters of Annihilation," p. 165; and Herbert Marder, Feminism and Art, pp. 56-57.

<sup>16</sup> Fleishman, 731, for example, states as much.

<sup>17</sup> See Sharon Kaehele and Howard German, "To the Lighthouse: Symbol and Vision," Bucknell Review, X (1962), 206, 208. The name, "Lily Briscoe," suggests Lily's personality and her androgeneity. "Lily" is the flower that suggests femininity of the most virginal and pure nature. "Briscoe" suggests the briskness, efficiency, and independence of a man. Mrs. Ramsay calls Lily "her little Brisk" (L 81).

<sup>18</sup> The book generally is referred to as a fantasy. As a result, some critics, like David Daiches, The Novel and the Modern World (Chicago, 1948), pp. 184-185, conclude that the book is not to be taken seriously and all but ignore it.

<sup>19</sup> David Bonnell Green, "Orlando and the Sackvilles: Addendum," PMLA, LXXI (March 1956), 268-269.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Winifred Holtby, Virginia Woolf (London, 1932), p. 177. Holtby, however, finds both the biographical explanation and this explanation inadequate. See also Joseph Warren Beach, The Twentieth Century Novel (New York, 1932), pp. 490-491; James Hafley,



The Glass Roof: Virginia Woolf as Novelist (Berkeley, 1954), p. 100; Aileen Pippett, The Moth and the Star: A Biography of Virginia Woolf (Boston, 1953), p. 277; Avrom Fleishman, The English Historical Novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf (Baltimore and London, 1971), pp. 233-245.

<sup>21</sup>The Divine Fire (New York, 1904), p. 67. Whether or not Woolf knew this novel is uncertain. She mentions Sinclair in a letter to Lytton Strachey. Strachey asks in a letter to Woolf dated February 10, 1922, whether or not she has seen May Sinclair's The Life and Death of Harriet Frean. He says that the book "has some merit, though nasty." Woolf replies on the following day that she perhaps shall read May Sinclair although she would rather read Strachey. See Leonard Woolf and James Strachey, eds. Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey: Letters (London, 1956), pp. 99-100.

<sup>22</sup>The Divine Fire, p. 103.

<sup>23</sup>See especially Holtby, Virginia Woolf, pp. 178-185, but also Beach, The Twentieth Century Novel, p. 491; Pippett, The Moth and the Star, p. 277; Hafley, The Glass Roof, pp. 98-103; Frank Baldanza, "Orlando and the Sackvilles," PMLA, LXX (March 1955), 274-275.

<sup>24</sup>See also The Merchant of Venice and Twelfth Night. If the female characters were played by boys, then the female characters in disguise as men were played by actors no longer in disguise as women. Jean Genet, of course, carries this kind of confusion to great lengths.

<sup>25</sup>Ralph Samuelson, "Virginia Woolf, Orlando, and the Feminist Spirit," The Western Humanities Review, XV (Winter 1961), 55-57.

<sup>26</sup>"The 'Caricature Value' of Parody and Fantasy in Orlando," Virginia Woolf: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Claire Sprague (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1971), p. 107.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 112-113.

<sup>28</sup>Baldanza, "Orlando and the Sackvilles," 279.

<sup>29</sup>See, for example, Henry Fielding's references to biography in the first two chapters of Book I of Joseph Andrews. A. A. Mendilow, "A Note on Orlando," Time and the Novel (London, 1942), pp. 228f, notes Woolf's mention of Sterne in her "mock-serious preface to Orlando," and sees a parallel between Sterne's manipulation of time, his mocking of conventions, and some of his other literary techniques in Tristram Shandy, and Woolf's biographer's similar behavior.

<sup>30</sup>See, for example, the selections from Ernst Kris, George Santayana, James K. Feibleman, and Susanne K. Langer in Theories of Comedy, ed. Paul Lauter (New York, 1964); W. H. Auden, "Concerning the Unpredictable," The New Yorker, February 21, 1970, pp. 118-125; Wylie Sypher, "The Meanings of Comedy," Comedy: Meaning and Form, ed. Robert Corri-





gan (San Francisco, 1965), pp. 18-60. See also the writings of Soren Kierkegaard and Sigmund Freud. The latter's Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious, ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York, 1960), might be particularly applicable to a discussion of Orlando. As Freud points out, the techniques of comedy can be used to express feelings of superiority as well as hostility and aggression. The person expressing these feelings is able to disguise them even from himself.

## II. F. Life with an "Alien Consciousness": Dorothy Richardson's Miriam on Marriage

<sup>1</sup>"Women in the Arts: Some Notes on the Eternally Conflicting Demands of Humanity and Art," Vanity Fair, XXIV, 3 (May 1925), 47, 100. Richardson's short story, "Haven," Life and Letters Today, XLII, 84 (August 1944), 97-105, is a companion piece to this essay. In the story, she describes a male writer and his attempt to decide between two environments in which to write. When the story is juxtaposed to the essay, we see that the female artist has neither of this male writer's alternatives.

<sup>2</sup>All references to Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage are to the four-volume J. W. Dent edition (London, 1967) and will be documented parenthetically in the text according to volume, abbreviated title of part, and page: PR Pointed Roofs (1915); Bw Backwater (1916); Hc Honeycomb (1917); Tun The Tunnel (1919); Int Interim (1919); D1 Deadlock (1921); RL Revolving Lights (1923); Trap The Trap (1925); O Oberland (1927); DLH Dawn's Left Hand (1931); CH Clear Horizon (1935); DH Dimple Hill (published with the first collected edition in 1938), MM March Moonlight (an uncompleted final part published with the Dent republication of the collected edition in 1967).

<sup>3</sup>See Shirley Rose, "The Social and Aesthetic Views of Dorothy M. Richardson," unpubl. diss. (London, 1967), pp. 70-71.

<sup>4</sup>"Leadership in Marriage," New Adelphi, II, 4 (June-August 1929), 345-346.

<sup>5</sup>Miriam's concern with defending women against charges of inferiority and with correcting the falsehoods men have recorded emerges on several fronts. Her frequent references to men as babies or children, for example, upsets the traditional categorization of women with children (e.g. III Trap 492; IV DLH 232). Actually, she associates women with children in the positive sense of "childlike" and men with children in the negative sense of "childish." Childlikeness she defines as a relatively innocent, fresh, vital, trusting, uncalculating response to life, a sense of being "comfortably at home in the world" (III RL 305-306; cf IV MM 607). Childishness, in contrast, is a distrustful, calculating yet ignorant approach toward life, a dissatisfaction with the world that leads to evasions of responsibility and to various forms of egocentric escapism (cf III RL 320, 291, 361; IV DLH 222). Richardson makes this distinction between childlike and





childish more explicit in one of her essays on the cinema ["Continuous Performance: Pictures and Films," Close Up, IV, 1 (January 1929), 57]. "The child trusts it's world," she says, "and those who, in all civilisations and within all circumstances, in face of all evidence and no matter what experience, cannot rid themselves of a child-like trust are by no means to be confused with those who shirk problems and responsibilities and remain ego-centrally within a dream-world that bears no relation to reality."

## II. G. From Either-Or to Both-And: May Sinclair's Female Artist-Characters

<sup>1</sup>All references to May Sinclair's works are to the following editions and will be documented parenthetically in the text: AC Audrey Craven (London, 1897); C The Creators (New York, 1910); MO Mary Olivier: A Life (New York, 1919); AW Arnold Waterlow: A Life (New York, 1924); RP The Return of the Prodigal and Other Stories (New York, 1914); TTS Tales Told by Simpson (New York, 1930); 3B The Three Brontës (Port Washington, New York, 1967; first published, 1912).

<sup>2</sup>Annis Pratt, "Women and Nature in Modern Fiction," Contemporary Literature, XIII, 4 (Autumn 1972), thinks that Mary rejects Nicholson's offer of marriage "in favor of the solitary life," and that "she is more concerned with the 'reality' of her own freely chosen writing life than with 'losing Richard,' more devoted to the psychic development initiated in moments of adolescent naturism than risking this freedom in a marriage" (481). Mary may choose not to interfere between Richard and the wife he does marry for a reason something like the one Pratt describes, but her initial decision not to marry is made in consideration of his needs just as much as of her own.

<sup>3</sup>After her engagement to Maurice Jourdain is broken, Mary Olivier reacts to her art in a similar way. She is happy because the poem upon which she works will "last a long time, through the winter and on into the spring. As long as it lasted she would be happy. She would be free from the restlessness and the endless idiotic reverie of desire" (MO 234). Undoubtedly these are instances of the kind of sublimation that produces art.

<sup>4</sup>The experience of motherhood, in fact, brings about Charlotte Brontë's death. Sinclair notes that Charlotte died happy with her husband, relieved of the inevitable struggle between him and her genius, which he did not admire. Arthur Nicholls, her husband, was tender to the sick Charlotte in a way that he probably would not have been to a Charlotte "in revolt." Like some of the characters in Clemence Dane's Legend, Sinclair blames Charlotte's husband for killing the characters in Charlotte's uncompleted novel, characters who "would have lived triumphantly if Charlotte Brontë had not married him" (3B 188).

When Sinclair insists throughout her book on the Brontës that the artist's perception and imagination are more important than his or her



experience, she defends herself as well. Just as Mrs. Oliphant resented Charlotte's "unsanctified knowledge of the mysteries" of love and marriage (3B 18-20), so Sinclair received similar criticisms for some of her novels, Anne Severn and the Fieldings (1922) among them. See, for example, Gertrude Atherton, "The Changing Genius of May Sinclair," Literary Digest International Book Review, I (December 1922), 11-12; Rebecca West, "Notes on Novels," New Statesman, December 2, 1922, 270-271.

<sup>5</sup>See, for example, "The Creators," Current Opinion, XLIX (December 1910), 690-691, and Arthur Adcock, Gods of Modern Grub Street: Impressions of Contemporary Authors (London, 1923), p. 278.

<sup>6</sup>"George Meredith," Outlook, June 19, 1909, 413-418.

<sup>7</sup>On the Idea of Comedy and of the Uses of the Comic Spirit (London, 1897; lecture originally delivered, 1877), pp. 28-30; 60-61.

<sup>8</sup>Three Guineas (London, 1938), p. 135.

### III. A. Presentation, Not Representation: May Sinclair and the Avant-Garde

<sup>1</sup>Frederick J. Hoffman, Charles Allen, and Carolyn F. Ulrich, The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography (Princeton, N. J., 1947) provides a detailed description of this cultural phenomenon.

<sup>2</sup>"'Prufrock: And Other Observations': A Criticism," The Little Review, IV, 8 (December 1917), 10-12, 14.

<sup>3</sup>"The Poems of F. S. Flint," English Review, XXXII (January 1921), 7.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 13. Sinclair, like Woolf and Richardson, does not draw precise distinctions between poetry and prose. Like Pound in "The Prose Tradition in Verse" (1914), however, she emphasizes the necessity of poetry taking on the clarity and directness of contemporary prose rather than prose taking on any of the traditional ornaments of poetry. Moreover, she stresses the difficulty of writing such prose. See, for example, The Allinghams (New York, 1927), p. 167.

<sup>5</sup>"Two Notes: I. On H. D.; II. On Imagism," The Egoist, June 1, 1915, 88-89.

<sup>6</sup>"The Poems of H. D.," Fortnightly Review, CXXI (March 1927), 339-340.

<sup>7</sup>"'Prufrock: And Other Observations,'" 11.

<sup>8</sup>In The Rector of Wyck (New York, 1925), pp. 201-204, essentially the same group appears again and the direction one of their discussions takes is similar. Corrine Y. Taylor, "A Study of May Sin-







clair--Woman and Writer, 1863-1946," unpubl. diss. (Washington, 1969), p. 71 associates the group in The Tree of Heaven with the Vorticists.

For discussions of Vorticism in general see Ezra Pound, Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir (London, 1960; first published, 1916); Walter Michel and C. J. Fox, eds. Wyndham Lewis on Art: Collected Writings 1913-1956 (New York, 1969), pp. 52-53, 96-97, 454-458; Walter Michel, Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings (London, 1971), especially Chapter II; Hugh Kenner, "The Visual World of Wyndham Lewis," pp. 11-40, an introduction to Michel's latest book; and William C. Wees, Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde (Toronto, 1972).

<sup>9</sup>All references to May Sinclair's The Tree of Heaven (New York, 1918; first published, 1917), will be abbreviated TH and documented parenthetically in the text.

<sup>10</sup>Michael Harrison's attitude toward war and war poetry is similar to that of Richard Aldington, at least as Sinclair describes it in "The Poems of Richard Aldington," English Review, XXXII (May 1921), 409.

<sup>11</sup>Michael Harrison is not the only one of Sinclair's artist-characters who confronts the War. See also Far End (New York, 1926) and Tasker Jevons: The Real Story (London, 1916). War is one problem Sinclair's male artists confront that her female artists do not.

<sup>12</sup>"The Return," Harper's Magazine, CXLII (May 1921), 693, 700.

<sup>13</sup>The Allinghams (New York, 1927), pp. 338-340.

### III. B. "Life in Its Own Right at First Hand": Dorothy Richardson, Miriam Henderson, and the Novel

<sup>1</sup>Some critics associate Richardson's world view with mysticism. See especially Caesar R. Blake, Dorothy Richardson (Ann Arbor, 1960). Miriam in Pilgrimage objects to the word "mystical" and redefines it as something more ordinary than most people allow (IV DLH 182). Her view is similar to Roger Fry's as quoted by Virginia Woolf in Roger Fry: A Biography (London, 1940), p. 271: "I've found a perfect description of mysticism--it's the attempt to get rid of mystery."

<sup>2</sup>See "Novels," Life and Letters Today, LVI, 127 (March 1948), 190, and "Adventure for Readers," Life and Letters Today, XXII (July 1939), 47.

<sup>3</sup>All references to Richardson's Pilgrimage are to the four-volume J. W. Dent edition (London, 1967) and will be documented parenthetically in the text according to volume, abbreviated title of part, and page: PR Pointed Roofs (1915); Bw Backwater (1916); Hc Honeycomb (1917); Tun The Tunnel (1919); Int Interim (1919); D1 Deadlock (1921); RL Revolving Lights (1923); Trap The Trap (1925); O Oberland (1927); DLH Dawn's Left Hand (1931); CH Clear Horizon (1935);



DH Dimple Hill (published with the first collected edition in 1938);  
 MM March Moonlight (an uncompleted final part published with the Dent republication of the collected edition in 1967).

<sup>4</sup>Most critics call Pilgrimage autobiographical but qualify their use of the word, usually by emphasizing the distance and objectivity with which Richardson treats her experiences. See, for example, Gloria Glikin, "Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage: A Critical Study," unpubl. diss. (New York University, 1961), pp. 2, 3, 75, 167-169; "Dorothy M. Richardson: The Personal 'Pilgrimage,'" PMLA, LXXVIII (December 1963), 600; "The 'I' and the 'She,'" Adam: International Review, XXXI (1966), 43.

<sup>5</sup>"Women in the Arts: Some Notes on the Eternally Conflicting Demands of Humanity and Art," Vanity Fair, XXIV, 3 (May 1925), 100.

<sup>6</sup>"Data for Spanish Publisher," ed. Joseph Prescott, The London Magazine, VI, 6 (June 1959), 19. See also Louise Morgan, "How Writers Work: Dorothy Richardson," Everyman, October 22, 1931, p. 400.

<sup>7</sup>Critics often refer to Richardson as a realist, sometimes without, sometimes with qualification. See, for example, Joseph Collins, "Dorothy Richardson and Her Censor," The Doctor Looks at Literature: Psychological Studies of Life and Letters (New York, 1923), p. 103; John Cowper Powys, Dorothy M. Richardson (London, 1931), p. 45; Horace Gregory, "Dorothy Richardson Reviewed," Life and Letters Today, XXI (March 1939), 37; R. Brimley Johnson, Some Contemporary Novelists (Women) (New York, 1967; first published, 1920), pp. 134, 146.

<sup>8</sup>See Josephine Piercy, ed., Modern Writers at Work (New York, 1930), 862-863.

<sup>9</sup>Morgan, "How Writers Work," p. 400.

<sup>10</sup>Piercy, ed., Modern Writers at Work.

<sup>11</sup>Critics usually identify them as such. See, for example, Robert Humphrey, Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel (Berkeley, 1954), p. 12.

<sup>12</sup>"Leadership in Marriage," New Adelphi, II, 4 (June-August 1929), 347.

<sup>13</sup>"The Reality of Feminism," The Ploughshare, n. s. II, 8 (September 1917), 245.

<sup>14</sup>See Shirley Rose, "The Unmoving Center: Consciousness in Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage," Contemporary Literature, X, 3 (Summer 1969), 381.





<sup>15</sup>"Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," Collected Essays, 4 vols. (London, 1966), III, 104. Gloria Glikin, "Through the Novelist's Looking-Glass," Kenyon Review, XXXI (1969), 297-319, discusses Richardson's portrait of H. G. Wells as Hypo Wilson. As Glikin points out, Wells acknowledged Richardson's portrait of him. In Experiment in Autobiography: Discoveries and Conclusions of a Very Ordinary Brain, 2 vols. (London, 1934), he notes that "among others who stayed with us was Dorothy Richardson, a schoolmate of Jane's. Dorothy has a very distinctive literary gift, acute intensity of expression, and an astonishingly vivid memory; her 'Pilgrimage' books are a very curious essay in autobiography; they still lack their due meed of general appreciation; and in one of them, The Tunnel, she has described our Worcester Park life with astonishing accuracy. I figure as Hypo in that description, and Jane is Alma" (II, 557).

<sup>16</sup>Yeats's major human limitation is, paradoxically, that he is a bit inhuman, that he cuts himself off from life (III Trap 502-503).

<sup>17</sup>Quakers Past and Present (London, 1914), pp. 33-35.

<sup>18</sup>The Rationale of Reward (1825), The Works of Jeremy Bentham, 11 vols. (New York, 1962), II, 189ff.

<sup>19</sup>"Continuous Performance: Pictures and Films," Close Up, IV, 1 (January 1929), 56.

<sup>20</sup>"Continuous Performance: The Thoroughly Popular Film," Close Up, II, 4 (April 1928), 48.

<sup>21</sup>A portion of Richardson's response to a 1929 questionnaire, reprinted in The Little Review Anthology, ed. Margaret Anderson (New York, 1958), p. 374.

<sup>22</sup>See "Women and the Future: A Trembling of the Veil Before the Eternal Mystery of 'La Gioconda,'" Vanity Fair (NY), XXII, 2 (April 1924), 40; "Letter to the Odd Man," Ye Crank and The Open Road, V, 3 (March 1907), 148.

<sup>23</sup>"Resolution," Purpose, I, 1 (January-March 1929), 9.

<sup>24</sup>"Women and the Future," 40.

<sup>25</sup>"Continuous Performance: Pictures and Films," 55.

<sup>26</sup>"Women and the Future," 40; John Austen and the Inseparables (London, 1930), p. 13.

<sup>27</sup>"Talent and Genius: Is not Genius Actually Far More Common Than Talent?" Vanity Fair (NY), XXI, 2 (October 1923), 118.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 120.





- <sup>29</sup> Shirley Rose, "The Social and Aesthetic Views of Dorothy M. Richardson," unpubl. diss. (London, 1967), p. 188 also reads the hermaphrodite image in Pilgrimage on philosophical and aesthetic levels.
- <sup>30</sup> Morgan, "How Writers Work," p. 400.
- <sup>31</sup> "Continuous Performance: The Film Gone Male," Close Up, IX, 1 (March 1932), 36-37.
- <sup>32</sup> Three Guineas (London, 1938), p. 96.
- <sup>33</sup> "Continuous Performance: A Tear for Lycidas," Close Up, VII, 3 (September 1930), 200.
- <sup>34</sup> "Continuous Performance," Close Up, I (July 1927), 36.
- <sup>35</sup> "Continuous Performance: The Film Gone Male," 37-38.
- <sup>36</sup> Richardson notes, in "Continuous Performance: Almost Persuaded," Close Up, IV, 6 (June 1929), 34, that novelists like Dos Passos have been influenced by the film and calls his text "cinematographic." She says, in a letter quoted by Piercy, ed., Modern Writers at Work, p. 862, that her own efforts to eliminate commentary and to achieve vividness give some of her work "the quality of scenes thrown on a screen and caused it to be called first kaleidoscopic and later cinematographical." For a recent attempt to discuss the role of the cinema in Richardson's work, see Paul Tiessen, "Cinema: The Medium as Metaphor in the Work of Wyndham Lewis and Dorothy Richardson," unpubl. diss. (Alberta, 1973).
- <sup>37</sup> "Experiments with Handwriting," New Adelphi, II, 4 (June-August 1929), 380. See also Gloria Glikin, "Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage," 36.
- <sup>38</sup> "Continuous Performance: Captions," Close Up, I, 3 (September 1927), 55; John Austen and the Inseparables, pp. 15-16.
- <sup>39</sup> "Novels," Life and Letters Today, LVI, 127 (March 1948), 192.
- <sup>40</sup> See "The Artist and the World Today," ed. Geoffrey West, The Bookman (May, 1934), 94. Richardson uses the phrase in answer to a questionnaire on the responsibility of the artist to society.
- <sup>41</sup> "Adventure for Readers," Life and Letters, XXII (July 1939), 51.
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid., 47.
- <sup>43</sup> Piercy, ed., Modern Writers at Work, 862-863.
- <sup>44</sup> "In the Days of the Comet," The Crank, IV, 11 (November, 1906), 376; Joseph Prescott, "Seven Letters from Dorothy M. Richardson," The Yale University Library Gazette, XXXIII, 3 (January 1959), 107.



<sup>45</sup>Critics frequently associate Richardson with Proust, pointing out similarities and differences. See, for example, P. B. Wadsworth, "My Friendship with Dorothy Richardson," Adam: International Review, XXXI (1966), 39; Gloria Glikin, "The 'I' and the 'She,'" Adam: International Review, XXXI (1966), 41-42; Caesar Blake, Dorothy Richardson (Ann Arbor, 1960), pp. 187-188; Vincent Brome, "A Last Meeting with Dorothy Richardson," London Magazine, VI, part 2 (June 1959), 31. See also Richardson's review, "Mr. Clive Bell's Proust," New Adelphi, II, 2 (December 1928-February 1929), 160-162.

<sup>46</sup>"Continuous Performance: The Film *Gone Male*," 36.

<sup>47</sup>"Leadership in Marriage," 347.

<sup>48</sup>"Continuous Performance," Close Up, II, 3 (March 1928), 55.

<sup>49</sup>"Excursion," English Story: Sixth Series (London, 1945).

<sup>50</sup>"Old Age," Adam: International Review, XXXI (1966), 25-26.

<sup>51</sup>The organic metaphor is biological, originating with Plato and Aristotle, revived by the Romantics. Emerson probably encountered it in Coleridge. See Norman Foerster, "Emerson on the Organic Principle in Art," Emerson, ed. Milton Konvitz and Stephen Whicher (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1961). Richardson possibly encountered it in Emerson. Her interest is reflected in Pilgrimage in Miriam's interest (II Int 414; III D1 20, 23, 26, 41-42, 51; IV DH 417-420, 532, 545; IV MM 658). Shirley Rose, "The Social and Aesthetic Views of Dorothy M. Richardson," pp. 134ff, discusses that interest.

<sup>52</sup>See Josephine M. Lane, "An Analysis of the Style of Dorothy M. Richardson's Novel," unpubl. diss. (University of Chicago, 1925).

<sup>53</sup>"About Punctuation," Adelphi, I, 11 (April 1924), 991, 994-996.

<sup>54</sup>"Truth," The Weekly Westminster, n. s., January 5, 1924, 316.

### III. C. "Stream of Consciousness": May Sinclair and Dorothy Richardson

<sup>1</sup>One earlier essay exists in the form of an introduction to The Judgment of Eve and Other Stories (London, 1914). According to Hrisey Dimitrakis Zegger, "May Sinclair's Psychological Novels," unpubl. diss. (New York University, 1970), pp. 74-75, the essay is a defense of Jamesian narrative methods. I was unable to locate the edition of these stories containing Sinclair's introduction.

<sup>2</sup>Sinclair's essay on Richardson appeared in two periodicals in the same month and year, The Egoist, V (April 1918), 57-59, and The Little Review, IV (April 1918), 3-11. In 1919, it appeared as the "Introduction" to the New York edition of Pointed Roofs. Some minor modi-





fications exist among these three printings. My references are to the 1919 "Introduction."

<sup>3</sup>"Introduction," pp. viii-ix.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. ix.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. xiii.

<sup>6</sup>See Stanley Kunitz, ed., Authors Today and Yesterday (New York, 1933), p. 562; Dorothy Richardson, "Novels," Life and Letters, LVI (March 1948), 189; Vincent Brome, "A Last Meeting with Dorothy Richardson," The London Magazine, VI (June 1959), 29. For a discussion of Richardson's objections, see Shirley Rose, "The Unmoving Center: Consciousness in Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage," Contemporary Literature, X, 3 (Summer 1969), 366-382.

<sup>7</sup>Principles of Psychology, 2 vols. (New York, 1907), I, 225.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 239.

<sup>9</sup>All references to May Sinclair's works are to the following editions and will be abbreviated and documented parenthetically in the text: DI A Defence of Idealism (New York, 1917); NI The New Idealism (New York, 1922); AC Audrey Craven (London, 1897); C The Creators (New York, 1910); FE Far End (New York, 1926).

<sup>10</sup>Although Sinclair borrowed the metaphor from William James and used it in a similar way, her thought in general must not be identified with his. James is one of the philosophers she says in the Defence of Idealism that she admires; nevertheless, she fundamentally disagrees with him (See DI vii-viii).

<sup>11</sup>Brome, "A Last Meeting with Dorothy Richardson," 29.

<sup>12</sup>Kunitz, Authors Today and Yesterday, p. 562.

<sup>13</sup>On Woolf and Bergson see, for example, Margaret Church, "Concepts of Time in the Novels of Virginia Woolf and Aldous Huxley," MFS, I, 2 (May 1955), 19-24; James Hafley, The Glass Roof: Virginia Woolf as Novelist (Berkeley, 1954). On both Woolf and Richardson in this context, see Shiv Kumar, Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel (London, 1962); William Albert Harms, "Impressionism as a Literary Style," unpubl. diss. (Indiana, 1971), pp. 35-38. On the inaccuracies of such associations, see John Graham, "A Negative Note on Bergson and Virginia Woolf," Essays in Criticism, VI (1956), 70-74; Shirley Rose, "The Unmoving Center,"

<sup>14</sup>The Rector of Wyck (New York, 1925), pp. 205-206.

<sup>15</sup>"Introduction," p. vii.



<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. xv-xvi.

<sup>17</sup>Meredith Starr, The Future of the Novel: Famous Authors on Their Methods: A Series of Interviews with Renowned Authors (Boston, 1921), pp. 87-88.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>19</sup>"Babbitt," New York Times, September 24, 1922, p. 11.

<sup>20</sup>Katharine Fullerton Gerould, "'Stream of Consciousness,'" The Saturday Review of Literature, October 22, 1927, 233-235, treats it as a single method. Lawrence Edward Bowling, "What is the Stream of Consciousness Technique?" PMLA, LXV, 4 (June 1950), 333-345, points out that, if stream of consciousness is a technique, there are variations within it and that, moreover, there is a difference between the stream of consciousness technique and the interior monologue. Both Robert Humphrey, Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel (Berkeley, 1954) and Melvin Friedman, Stream of Consciousness: A Study in Literary Method (New Haven, 1955) treat stream of consciousness as a category of fiction identified by subject matter and utilizing several techniques and devices. Humphrey distinguishes among these techniques by determining the degree to which the author is between the consciousness of the character and the reader, while Friedman, following Bowling, emphasizes levels of consciousness, from those closest to speech to passive sensory impressions.

<sup>21</sup>Zegger, "May Sinclair's Psychological Novels," documents this shift without dealing with the artist-characters who reflect it.

<sup>22</sup>"Fame," Tales Told by Simpson (New York, 1930), p. 133.

<sup>23</sup>Tasker Jevons: The Real Story (London, 1916), pp. 34, 141.

<sup>24</sup>Tanqueray's position is the one Sinclair takes in her comments on the Brontës. See The Three Brontës (Port Washington, New York, 1967; first published, 1912), pp. 165-166. It also is reminiscent of Henry James's who talks in his 1908 Preface to The Spoils of Poynton of the "virus of suggestion," the "merest grain, the speck of truth, of beauty, of reality, scarce visible to the common eye" which is all the novelist needs for a subject.

<sup>25</sup>Katharine Gerould's comments on the stream of consciousness (see footnote 20, above), published one year after Far End, seem a calculated refutation of all that Sinclair's character and Sinclair herself say about the experiment. Gerould emphasizes, for example, how easy the current fad is. "Any clever sophomore can do it," she insists (234).

<sup>26</sup>See, for example, R. Brimley Johnson, Some Contemporary Novelists (Women) (Freeport, N. Y., 1967; first published, 1920), pp. 41-42;





William York Tindall, Forces in Modern British Literature: 1885-1956 (New York, 1947), pp. 218-219; Gertrude Atherton, "The Changing Genius of May Sinclair," Literary Digest International Book Review, II (December 1922), 11; Zegger, "May Sinclair's Psychological Novels," pp. 156-166.

<sup>27</sup> as Gloria Glikin, "The 'I' and the 'She,'" Adam: International Review, XXXI (1966), 42-43, suggests in the case of Richardson. As Glikin notes, Richardson in Pilgrimage most frequently refers to Miriam in the third person. Quite often, however, in the last three volumes of the four-volume edition, she shifts to the first person. Rarely does she use the second person. Sinclair, on the other hand, alternates in Mary Olivier between the third and second person, using the first person initially only in direct quotations of Mary's words and thoughts, usually preceded by "she thought." Sometimes, however, especially toward the end of the novel, either the introductory words or the quotation marks or both are omitted.

<sup>28</sup> as one early critic of Sinclair thinks. Carl H. Grabo, The Technique of the Novel (New York, 1928), pp. 72-73, insists that the use of the first person in Mary Olivier results in greater intensity and intimacy between character and reader, that the third person conveys impersonality and suggests formulated thoughts which might have been spoken aloud, and that the use of the second person carries even further the impersonality. He calls such passages "impersonal introspection, a thought of self carried over to a generalization and made a text for philosophizing."

<sup>29</sup> Both novels have been read according to the stations of the mystic way. On Richardson, see Caesar Blake, Dorothy Richardson (Ann Arbor, 1960), pp. 62ff. On Sinclair, see Zegger, "May Sinclair's Psychological Novels," pp. 138ff.

### III. D. The Metaphysics Behind a Feminine Aesthetics: May Sinclair and the New Idealism

<sup>1</sup> "Women and Fiction," Collected Essays, 4 vols. (London, 1966), II, 148.

<sup>2</sup> T. E. M. Boll, "On the May Sinclair Collection," Library Chronicle, XXVII (Winter 1961), 10, says that Sinclair "flagellated herself into becoming an intellectual for reasons we can only guess at." Sinclair's characterization of Gwenda Cartaret in The Three Sisters (New York, 1914) or of Miss Quincey in Superseded (New York, 1906; first published, 1901) may have prompted Boll's remark. Nevertheless, one cannot forget the enormous intellectual curiosity and enthusiasm of many of her other characters, Mary Olivier and Arnold Waterlow among them. See Corrine Y. Taylor, "A Study of May Sinclair--Woman and Writer, 1863-1946," unpubl. diss. (Washington, 1969), p. 69.





<sup>3</sup>All references to May Sinclair's works are to the following editions and will be abbreviated and documented parenthetically in the text: DI A Defence of Idealism (New York, 1917); NI The New Idealism (New York, 1922); AC Audrey Craven (London, 1897); MO Mary Olivier: A Life (New York, 1919); FE Far End (New York, 1926); A The Allingham's (New York, 1927); US Uncanny Stories (New York, 1923).

<sup>4</sup>"How It Strikes a Mere Novelist," Votes for Women, December 24, 1908, p. 211.

<sup>5</sup>"Introduction," Pointed Roofs, by Dorothy Richardson (New York, 1919), pp. vi-vii.

<sup>6</sup>See Chapter II, "Mysticism and Vitalism," of Underhill's Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness (London, 1910). The desire for unity, she says, is a "deep instinct of the human mind. She adds that "this hunger--that innate craving for, and intuition of, a final Unity, an unchanging good--will go on, however heartily we may feed on those fashionable systems which offer us a dynamic or empirical universe." Sinclair disagrees with Underhill on some points (cf DI 249-250), but their metaphysics are similar in many respects. Sinclair claims no originality (DI xvi) and acknowledges Underhill as one of her sources.

<sup>7</sup>The extent to which Sinclair possibly is unsuccessful is revealed by Bertrand Russell's review of The New Idealism entitled "Philosophic Idealism at Bay," Nation and Athenaeum, August 5, 1922, 625-626. Russell compliments Sinclair for her love of philosophy, her thoroughness, and her desire to be fair, but he does not leave it at that. His tone is kindly but somewhat condescending. Sinclair's defense of idealism is formidable, he suggests, to the extent that the position can be defended at all. He criticizes her tendency to treat the realists as if they were of one mind and to emphasize their weaknesses rather than to distinguish among their differences and to see the strengths of each as contributions to a possible whole. Most importantly, he points out that Sinclair tends to confuse what is essentially a rigorous scientific method of philosophical inquiry with a metaphysics. It is quite possible, he says, to be an idealist of some kind in metaphysics and, at the same time, an advocate of the realists' method. The new realism attacks, he points out, the stock notions and labels of traditional philosophy and substitutes for this inadequate symbolism a better one, that of mathematics. Mathematical symbols must be understood thoroughly before the new realism can be evaluated; Sinclair does not have that understanding. She and the new realists, he concludes, might disagree in some instances because of their ways of talking about their ideas. Sinclair tends to use the old, ill-defined labels like "mind." In other instances, of course, the disagreements are more fundamental.

Sinclair is aware of some of these problems. She does have a sense of and a considerable admiration for the realists' attempt to revolutionize the method of philosophical inquiry, to reconcile it with science, and to use mathematics as its language (cf NI 19, 36-37). Moreover, she admits her own deficiencies in mathematics (NI xi).



<sup>8</sup>Pilgrimage, 4 vols. (London, 1967), IV, 420.

<sup>9</sup>"A Hero of Fiction," Temple Bar, CXV (September 1898), 147-149.

<sup>10</sup>"The Poems of F. S. Flint," English Review, CXV (September 1898), 147-149.

<sup>11</sup>"Three American Poets of Today," Atlantic Monthly, XCVIII (July 1906).

### III. E. Theory and Practice: Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson

<sup>1</sup>"The Sad Years," TLS, August 29, 1918, p. 403.

<sup>2</sup>All references to the following London editions of Woolf's works will be abbreviated and documented parenthetically in the text: WD A Writer's Dairy: Being Extracts From the Diary of Virginia Woolf, ed. Leonard Woolf (1953); CW Contemporary Writers (1965); CE Collected Essays, 4 vols. (1966); AROO A Room of One's Own (1929).

<sup>3</sup>"Olive Schreiner," The New Republic, March 18, 1925, p. 103.

<sup>4</sup>Jean Guiguet, in her "Preface" to Woolf's Contemporary Writers (London, 1965), p. 11, disagrees with critics who think Woolf is indebted to Richardson. Woolf was stimulated, Guiguet insists, by what she disliked about the other writers she read, not by what she liked. Leonard Woolf also objects to a link between his wife's work and that of Richardson or Joyce. He points out that she wrote "The Mark on the Wall" early in 1917, before she read either the manuscript of Ulysses or The Tunnel. See Downhill All the Way (London, 1967), p. 59. Certainly influences, negative or positive, are difficult to document; nevertheless, to view the work of any writer, including Woolf, in an aesthetic vacuum is as much a disservice to her work as it is a service. Reactions to criticism more favorable than she deserves frequently are more unfavorable than she deserves.

<sup>5</sup>See Richardson's unpubl. letters to John Cowper Powys, April 24, 1940, and July, 1941, as well as an unpubl. letter to Henry Savage, January, 1950, in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

<sup>6</sup>"Men and Women," TLS, March 18, 1920, p. 182.

<sup>7</sup>"Lady Ritchie," TLS, March 6, 1919, p. 123.

<sup>8</sup>"Men and Women."

<sup>9</sup>Harvena Richter, Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage (Princeton, 1970), p. 147, surprisingly concludes that Woolf's sentence is more







"feminine" than Richardson's. Woolf's sentence, Richter says, is more spontaneous and unconscious while Richardson's is consciously produced. Such conclusions must be based, not on a reading of Pilgrimage, but on Woolf's reviews.

<sup>10</sup>For the publishing history of these essays, see Samuel Hynes, "The Whole Contention Between Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," Novel, I (Fall 1967), 36, 38-40.

<sup>11</sup>By her choice of this date, Woolf associates the shift in values with an artistic event, the Post-Impressionist exhibition at the Grafton Galleries in London. That one of her female artist-characters, Lily Briscoe, is a painter who works according to the nonrepresentational theories of the Post-Impressionists, is appropriate.

<sup>12</sup>Pilgrimage, 4 vols. (London, 1967), II, 129.

<sup>13</sup>Woolf is not alone in suggesting that Pilgrimage lacks art. Indeed, this charge is one of the major reasons for the critical neglect of Richardson's work. Too numerous to mention, reviewers and critics charge that Pilgrimage lacks selection and significance, plot, interpretation, a hierarchy of values, meaning, even character and setting. Ironically, their dismissal of the work as "life," rather than "art," is precisely what its author would have anticipated and approved.

<sup>14</sup>One of Robert Humphrey's assumptions, in Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel (Berkeley, 1954) is that "the problem of form for the stream-of-consciousness novelist is the problem of how order is imposed on disorder. He sets out to depict what is chaotic (human consciousness at an inchoate level) and is obligated to keep his depiction from being chaotic (to make a work of art)" (p. 85). Humphrey uses Ulysses and Mrs. Dalloway as examples. Like so many other critics, he thinks that Richardson was unable to keep her depiction of chaos from being chaotic.

<sup>15</sup>Dorothy M. Richardson (London, 1931), p. 7.

<sup>16</sup>Dorothy Richardson (Ann Arbor, 1960), p. 187.

<sup>17</sup>Richardson, as her essay, "Compensations?" in Focus, VI, 1 (July 1928), 3-7, suggests, dislikes both "cheerful resignation" and "horrified Schopenhaueresque revolt." Instead, she bases her optimism upon a recognition of permanence in a world preoccupied with change and dissolution. This recognition she associates with women. As Shirley Rose points out in "Dorothy Richardson: The First Hundred Years; A Retrospective View," Dalhousie Review, LII, 4 (1973), 93, Richardson's optimism, "in contrast to the twentieth-century artist's general preoccupation with moral and physical decay may be responsible in part for the critical neglect of her work."



III. F. The Creative Struggle in a Destructive Environment:  
Virginia Woolf's Lily Briscoe, Orlando, and Miss LaTrobe

<sup>1</sup>All references to the following London editions of Woolf's works will be abbreviated and documented parenthetically in the text: VO The Voyage Out (1929; first published, 1915); ND Night and Day (1919); L To the Lighthouse (1927); W The Waves (1931); BA Between the Acts (1960; first published, 1941); O Orlando (1928); AROO A Room of One's Own (1929); TG Three Guineas (1938).

<sup>2</sup>"Women in the Arts: Some Notes on the Eternally Conflicting Demands of Humanity and Art," Vanity Fair, XXIV, 3 (May 1925), 47.

<sup>3</sup>Ralph Samuelson, "More Than One Room of Her Own: Virginia Woolf's Critical Dilemmas," Western Humanities Review, XIX (1965), 249-256, sees a contradiction between Woolf's denunciation of the inhibiting emphasis on female chastity and anonymity and her own inhibitions which she reveals in judgments of writers like Joyce and Lawrence. Samuelson ignores Woolf's admission that she is thus inhibited. Certainly the fact that she cannot rid herself entirely of these inhibitions is not to be equated with the advocacy of them. The latter would constitute a real contradiction.

<sup>4</sup>The analogy between the tree and the poem about the tree suggests the organic metaphor, the idea that a poem grows from within according to its own nature. Form is not imposed from without. Further, the analogy between Orlando and such a poem suggests that the self is a work of art. See Avrom Fleishman, The English Historical Novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf (Baltimore and London, 1971), pp. 240-241.

<sup>5</sup>On Isa and her poetry see Warren Beck, "For Virginia Woolf," Forms of Modern Fiction, ed. William Van O'Connor (Minneapolis, 1948), pp. 247-248; Renee Watkins, "Survival in Discontinuity--Virginia Woolf's Between the Acts," Massachusetts Review, X (Spring 1969), 361; James Hafley, The Glass Roof: Virginia Woolf as Novelist (Berkeley, 1954), p. 160; Josephine Schaefer, The Three-Fold Nature of Reality in the Novels of Virginia Woolf (London, 1965), p. 188.

<sup>6</sup>A number of critics emphasize this focus on the group rather than on the individual. Many of them insist that the individual characters in the novel are not well-developed, that they impress us as tendencies or representatives of ideas rather than as real people. See, for example, W. H. Mellers, "Virginia Woolf: The Last Phase," Kenyon Review, IV (1942), 386; Bernard Blackstone, Virginia Woolf: A Commentary (New York, 1949), p. 241; Renee Watkins, "Survival in Discontinuity," 358-359.

Miss LaTrobe's somewhat different relationship to the life around her causes critics to contrast her with Lily Briscoe. Most of them see the former as more immersed in life and the latter as more aloof. See, for example, James Hafley, The Glass Roof, p. 157.





<sup>7</sup> Among those who see the book as pessimistic are Bernard Blackstone, Virginia Woolf, pp. 237-238, and Jean Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Works (London, 1965), pp. 326-327. Among those who see the book as optimistic are Warren Beck, "For Virginia Woolf," p. 253; Marilyn Zorn, "The Pageant in Between the Acts," MFS, II (February 1956), 32-35; and Ann Y. Wilkinson, "A Principle of Unity in Between the Acts," Virginia Woolf: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Claire Sprague, (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1961), pp. 145-154. Among those who find the book affirmative, though bleak, are Don Summerhayes, "Society, Morality Analogy: Virginia Woolf's World Between the Acts," MFS, IX (1963), p. 332; and Stuart Hampshire, "Virginia Woolf," Modern Writers and Other Essays (London, 1970), pp. 40, 45-46.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Renee Watkins, "Survival in Discontinuity," 368, 375.

<sup>9</sup> See especially Avrom Fleishman, The English Historical Novel, p. 249.

#### IV. Conclusion

<sup>1</sup> "The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy," Social Theory and Social Structure, rev. ed. (Glencoe, 1964), p. 423. Related to the idea of the self-fulfilling prophecy is that of the "reflected or looking-glass self" discussed by Charles Horton Cooley, Chapter V, Human Nature and the Social Order, rev. ed. (New York, 1922). Our feelings about ourselves, Cooley says, are formed in part on the basis of how we imagine we are perceived and, more important, judged by others. What we imagine another's judgment to be and how seriously we take it depends, of course, upon how we judge him.

<sup>2</sup> The "damned if you do, damned if you don't" situation is similar to what psychiatrists call a "double-bind," an ambiguous situation in which a person is given contradictory messages and cannot predict what action will lead to a successful outcome. The resulting insecurity and the crippling of a person's power to act can manifest itself in schizophrenia, or what R. D. Laing describes as a radical split between mind and body. See Ernest Becker, The Revolution in Psychiatry: The New Understanding of Man (Glencoe, 1964), pp. 46-50.

<sup>3</sup> "The Independent Woman," The Second Sex, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York, 1964; first published, 1949), pp. 679-715.

<sup>4</sup> See Rubin Rabinovitz, The Reaction Against Experiment in the English Novel 1950-1960 (New York and London, 1967), pp. 22ff.

<sup>5</sup> See Elizabeth C. Baker, "Sexual Art-Politics," Art and Sexual Politics: Why Have There Been No Great Woman Artists? ed. Thomas B. Hess and Elizabeth C. Baker (New York and London, 1973), pp. 108-119; Lee Hall, "In the University," Art and Sexual Politics, pp. 130-146;





Frank Barron, "Sex Differences in Self-Differentiation and Motivation," Artists in the Making (New York and London, 1972), pp. 33-37; Lawrence J. Hatterer, M. D., "The Woman Artist," The Artist in Society: Problems and Treatment of the Creative Personality (New York, 1965), pp. 172-178.

<sup>6</sup> See Thomas B. Hess, "Great Women Artists," Art and Sexual Politics, pp. 44-54.



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## APPENDICES I AND II

### Female Artist-Characters in Literature

Female artist-characters exist in important as well as relatively insignificant works of several genre written during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by both well-known and forgotten men and women from a number of countries. A female artist-character is not a woman who merely dabbles in the arts, but one who aspires to become a professional or actually does become one for some period of her life, however brief. The ones included in these appendices do not constitute a statistically-representative sample; that is, one cannot generalize from them to all female artist-characters. The ability to draw such a sample depends first upon knowing the titles of all the works containing female artist-characters and then upon having access to the ones randomly selected. The difficulties of locating all female artist-characters are obvious. The ones included in these appendices were discovered during the course of reading for other reasons, through references in literary criticism, and through the recollections of other readers. Moreover, among any selected group of works, several are unlikely to be in print. Others are available only in one of many foreign languages in which the reader is not fluent. Still others are obtainable only with considerable delay from overseas libraries. Undoubtedly, many more such characters exist. Nevertheless, the number included should be sufficient to suggest significant tendencies.

The works are divided into those written by men (Appendix I) and those written by women (Appendix II) in order to detect any differences



in the treatment of the female artist-character that might be related to the sex of the writer. The works in each appendix are arranged chronologically in case any changes in treatment are apparent over time. The lists are weighted, however, in favor of nineteenth and early twentieth-century works; the predecessors and contemporaries of Sinclair, Richardson, and Woolf are represented more fully than are their successors. Any statements about subsequent changes, therefore, must be considered tentative.

Some of the categories used in these appendices are more meaningful than others. Naturally, each book does not provide the same amount of information about the artist-character(s) it contains. In some instances, too, information may have been overlooked. The works listed were read over a period of several years with varying amounts of concentration and with different purposes in mind. Even so, the importance of a female artist-character in the work, the importance of the fact that she is an artist, and the type of artist she is, all are relatively easy to determine. These portions of the appendices can be useful even to people unfamiliar with the works or authors in question. The female artist-character's motives, her relationship to men, and her attitudes toward marriage, however, involve a certain amount of interpretation and possible disagreement, dependent as they are upon point of view and tone and, in significant instances, upon the author's psychological make-up and social milieu. Every female artist-character's situation involves a complex configuration of elements that is difficult, if not impossible, to quantify. Her motives may be mixed, or they may change in the course of a novel. She may be involved in not one but a series of relationships with men. Each relationship





might be of a different nature. One can define "relationship" as a relatively long-term involvement with commitment on both sides, but commitment from the female artist-character's point of view might involve anything from close friendship to financial need to sexual need, or any combination of these with or without a marriage license. Her satisfaction with the relationship depends upon the extent to which it gives her what she seeks, but what she seeks may not be approved in the book as a whole, or she may decide that she has been seeking the wrong things. The latter situation is common since the female artist-character, given contradictory advice about the relationship between the traditional female role and her art, often is confused. These sections of the appendices, therefore, probably were more useful in the writing of the first chapter of this study than they can be to readers unfamiliar with the works and authors in question.



## CODES USED IN APPENDICES I AND II

TITLE AND GENRE: N = Novel  
 SS = Short Story  
 P = Play

IMPORTANCE 1 = Central character  
 IN WORK: 2 = One of two or more equally-important characters  
 3 = Minor character  
 4 = Mentioned

IMPORTANCE OF FACT THAT SHE IS ARTIST: 1 = A central fact in the characterization  
 2 = Of some importance in the characterization  
 3 = Of minor importance in the characterization  
 4 = Of no importance

MOTIVES: 1 = Commitment to art, ability unknown  
 1+ = Commitment to art, justified by ability  
 1- = Commitment to art, unjustified by ability  
 2 = Vanity, desire for fame  
 3 = Self-expression, art as autobiography  
 4 = Art as substitute for life, love, or opportunity to play traditional female role  
 5 = Economic necessity or desire for money  
 6 = Rebellion against traditional female role  
 7 = Desire to impart a message

RELATIONSHIP TO MEN: 1 = Unsatisfactory relationship with or marriage to male artist  
 2 = Satisfactory relationship with or marriage to male artist  
 3 = Unsatisfactory relationship with or marriage to conventional nonartist  
 4 = Satisfactory relationship with or marriage to conventional nonartist  
 5 = Unsatisfactory relationship with or marriage to less conventional nonartist  
 6 = Satisfactory relationship with or marriage to less conventional nonartist  
 7 = Widowed or single by default

ATTITUDES TOWARD  
 MARRIAGE: 1 = Advised not to fall in love or marry  
 2 = Advised to fall in love or marry  
 3 = Rejects offer of marriage, idea of marriage, or already-contracted marriage  
 4 = Willing to renounce career for love or marriage  
 5 = Concludes that art is not enough; love or spiritual dimension needed  
 6 = Man gives up career when he marries female artist



APPENDIX I: Female Artist-Characters in Literature Written by Men

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title &amp; Genre</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Character(s)</u>	<u>Importance in Work</u>	<u>Importance of Fact that She is Artist</u>	<u>Type of Artist</u>	<u>Motives</u>	<u>Relationship to Men</u>	<u>Attitudes Toward Marriage</u>
Goethe, Wilhelm Johann Wolfgang von	Meister (N)	1795-6	Mariana Philina Aurelia Mignon	3 3 3 3	3 3 3 3	actresses	5  1 3	  7	
Hoffmann, "Die Fermate" E.T.A. (SS)		1813	Miss Meibel Teresina Lauretta	4 2 2	1 1 1	singer guitarist singer	5  2,3		
"Don Juan" (SS)		1813	Donna Anna (singer who plays her)	3	1	singer			
"Rat Krespel" (SS)		1813	Antonia	2	1	singer			
"Das Fraulein von Scudery" (SS)		1819	Mademoiselle de Scudery	1	4	poet			
Scott, Walter Waverly (N)		1814	Flora McIver	3	3	poet	3(extension of patriotic impulse)		3
Grillparzer, Franz Sappho (P)		1818	Sappho	1	1	poet	1+, 4		5





<u>Author</u>	<u>Title &amp; Genre</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Character(s)</u>	<u>Importance in Work</u>	<u>Importance of Fact that She is Artist</u>	<u>Type of Artist</u>	<u>Motives</u>	<u>Relationship to Men</u>	<u>Attitudes Toward Marriage</u>
Andersen, Hans Christian	<u>The Improvisatore or Life in Italy (N)</u>	1832	Annunciata	2	1	singer	1+, 3		5
Balzac, Honoré	<u>Lost Illusions (N)</u>	1837-43	Madame de Bargeton Florine Coralie Camille Maupin	3 4 3 4	4 2 2 3	poet actress actress novelist	1-, 3, 4  2, 3, 5	1, 5  2	
Thackeray, William Makepeace	<u>Pendennis (N)</u>	1849-50	Miss Fotheringhay Blanch Amory	3 3	1 2	actress poet	5 1-, 2		4
Melville, Herman	<u>Pierre (N)</u>	1852	Isabel Banford  Lucy Tartan	2  2	3  3	singer-composer-guitarist painter	3, 4 5	1 1	5
Hawthorne, Nathaniel	<u>The Blithedale Romance (N)</u>	1852	Zenobia (pseud.)	2	4	writer (stories, tracts)	6, 4	3	
Reade, Charles	<u>Peg Woffington (N)</u>	1852	Margaret Woffington	1	1	actress	1+	5	5
Thackeray, William Makepeace	<u>The Newcomes (N)</u>	1853-5	Madam d'Ivry Miss Cann Miss Pinnifer Miss Folthorpe (Mrs. Sherrick)	4 4 4 4	3 2 1 2	poet pianist novelist singer	5, 1	7	



<u>Author</u>	<u>Title &amp; Genre</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Character(s)</u>	<u>Importance in Work</u>	<u>Importance of Fact that She is Artist</u>	<u>Type of Artist</u>	<u>Motives</u>	<u>Relationship to Men</u>	<u>Attitudes Toward Marriage</u>
Dickens, Charles	<u>Little Dorritt</u> (N)	1857	Fanny Dorritt	3	3	dancer	5,2	4	
Hawthorne, Nathaniel	<u>The Marble Faun</u> (N)	1859	Miriam Schaefer Hilda	2 2	2 2	painter painter	3,4 1-,4	2	3
Meredith, George	<u>Emilia in England</u> (Sandra Belloni) (N)	1864	Emilia	1	2	singer-harpist-pianist-organist-composer	5,2,1+		1,2
	<u>Vittoria</u> (N)	1866	Emilia (Vittoria)	1	3	singer	5	3	
James, Henry	<u>Roderick Hudson</u> (N)	1875	Augusta Blanchard	4	1	painter			
Meredith, George	<u>The Egoist</u> (N)	1879	Laetitia Dale	3	3	poet	5		4
Zola, Emile	<u>Nana</u> (N)	1880	Nana	1	3	actress	2,3	1,5	3
Shaw, G. B.	<u>The Irrational Knot</u> (N)	1880	Susanna Conolly Elinor McQuinch	3 3	1 3	actress novelist	5 6,5	6	3 3
	<u>Love Among the Artists</u> (N)	1881	Mary Sutherland Madge Brailsford Aurelie Szczyplica	2 2 2	4 1 1	painter actress pianist	1- 6,1+ 1+	4 1 1	1 3 3





<u>Author</u>	<u>Title &amp; Genre</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Character(s)</u>	<u>Importance in Work</u>	<u>Importance of Fact that She is Artist</u>	<u>Type of Artist</u>	<u>Motives</u>	<u>Relationship to Men</u>	<u>Attitudes Toward Marriage</u>
Meredith, George	Diana of the Crossways (N)	1885	Diana	1	2	novelist	5,6,1	3,4	3
Strindberg, August	Comrades (P)	1888	Bertha Alberg	1	1	painter	2,6,1-	1	
	Creditors (P)	1888	Tekla	2	1	novelist	3,6,1-	1	6
James, Henry	The Tragic Muse (N)	1890	Miriam Rooth	1	1	actress	1+,3,2	3,2	3,6
Gissing, George	The New Grub Street (N)	1891	Maud & Dora Milvain	3	2	writers of popular fiction	5		
Kipling, Rudyard	The Light That Failed (N)	1891	Maisie	2	1	painter	2,1-	1	3
Wilde, Oscar	The Picture of Dorian Gray (N)	1891	Sybil Vane	3	1	actress	4,5	5	4,5
Moore, George	Esther Waters (N)	1894	Miss Rice	3	3	novelist			
James, Henry	"Greville Fane" (SS)	1893	Greville Fane (pseud.)	1	1	popular novelist	5	7	
	"The Death of the Lion" (SS)	1894	Guy Walsingham (pseud.)	4	1	popular novelist			
	"The Next Time" (SS)	1895	Mrs. Highmore	3	1	popular novelist	5,1-	4	



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James, Henry	"The Figure in 1896 the Carpet" (SS)		Gwendolen Erme	3	3	novelist		
Gissing, George	<u>The Whirlpool</u> (N)	1897	Alma Frothing- ham	2	1	violinist	5	3, 4
Moore, George	<u>Evelyn Innes</u> (N)	1898	Evelyn Innes	1	1	singer- musician	5	1, 5
Caine Hall	<u>The Christian</u> (N)	1898	Glory Quayle	2	2	actress	3	3, 4, 5
Dreiser, Theodore	<u>Sister Carrie</u> (N)	1900	Carrie Meeber	1	3	actress	3	5
James, Henry	"Broken Wings" 1900 (SS)		Mrs. Harvey	2	1	popular novelist	7	
Mann, Thomas	<u>Buddenbrooks</u> (N)	1901	Gerda Arnold- son Buddenbrook	3	1	violinist	3	
Bennett, Arnold	Anna of the 1902 <u>Five Towns</u> (N)		Beatrice Sutton	4	3	painter		
James, Henry	"The Story In 1903 It" (SS)		Maud Blessing- bourne	2	4	potential novelist		
Mann, Thomas	"Tonio Kröger" 1903 (SS)		Consuelo Kröger	3	1	pianist, 1+ mandolin- player		



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Mann, Thomas	"Tristan" (SS)	1903	Frau Klöster-jahn	2	1	pianist	1+	3 or 4?	
Galsworthy, John	The Man of Property (N)	1906	Francie Forsyte	4	1	popular composer	5		
Shaw, G.B.	Misalliance(P)	1910	Lina Szczempanowska	3	3	acrobat	1,6		3
Beerbohm, Max	Zuleika Dobson (N)	1911	Zuleika Dobson	1	3	conjurer	2,5		
Proust, Marcel	Remembrance of Things Past (N)	1913-27	Berma	3	1	actress	1+,5		
Lewis, Wyndham	Tarr (N)	1918	Bertha Lunken	3	4	painter		1	
Maugham, W. Somerset	The Moon and Sixpence (N)	1919	Rose Waterford	4	1	popular novelist			
Lawrence, D.H.	Women in Love (N)	1920	Gudrun Brangwen	2	2	sculptor	4	3,1	3
Anderson, Sherwood	Dark Laughter (N)	1925	Bernice	3	1	fiction writer	2,3,6	1	
Ford, Ford Madox	Some Do Not... A Man Could Stand Up (N)	(N) 1924	Mrs. Wannop	3	1	popular novelist	5,1	7	





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O'Neill, Eugene	<u>Welded (P)</u>	1924	Eleanor	2	1	actress	1,4	1	
Huxley, Aldous	<u>Point Counter Point (N)</u>	1928	Ramona Saville (pseud.)	4	1	poet(s)			
Lewis, Wyndham	<u>The Apes of God (N)</u>	1930	Melanie Blackwell Isabel Kein Robinia Osmond Harriet Finnian-Shaw Miss Ansell	All very minor characters with artistic pretensions					
Maugham, W. Somerset	<u>"The Colonel's Lady" (SS)</u>	1946	E. K. Hamilton Peregrine	2	1	poet	3,1	3	
Mann, Thomas	<u>Dr. Faustus (N)</u>	1947	Clarissa Rodde Inez Rodde	3 3	1 3	actress secret poet	4		4
Wilson, Edmund	<u>"Ellen Terhune" 1951 in Memoirs of Hecate County (SS)</u>		Ellen Terhune	1	1	composer	4,1+	1	



APPENDIX II: Female Artist-Characters in Literature Written by Women

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title &amp; Genre</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Character(s)</u>	<u>Importance in Work</u>	<u>Importance of Fact that She is Artist</u>	<u>Type of Artist</u>	<u>Motives</u>	<u>Relationship to Men</u>	<u>Attitudes Toward Marriage</u>
Stæhl-Holstein, Madame de	<u>Corinne</u> (N)	1807	Corinne	1	1	singer- composer- improvisator	2,1+,6	3	3,5
Sand, George	<u>Consuelo</u> (N)	1844	Consuelo Corilla	1 4	1 1	singer singer	1+ 2	1,6,7	1,3,5
	<u>La Comtesse de Rudolstadt</u> (N)	1844 (c.)	Consuelo	1	3	singer			
Brontë, Anne	<u>The Tenant of Wildfell Hall</u> (N)	1848	Helen Huntingdon	1	3	painter	5,1+,6	3,7,4	3,4
Jewsbury, Geraldine	<u>The Half-Sisters</u> (N)	1848	Bianca	2	1	actress	5,1+	3,6	4,5
Craik, Elizabeth Cleghorn	<u>Olive</u> (N)	1850	Olive Rothesay	1	2	painter	5,4,1	2,4	1,3,4,5
Eliot, George	<u>"Mr. Gilfil's Love Story"</u> (SS)	1858	Caterina	2	3	singer- pianist	3	3	
Browning, Elizabeth B. (N-in-verse)	<u>Aurora Leigh</u> (N-in-verse)	1859	Aurora Leigh	1	1	poet	1+,6,5	3,4	3,5





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Eliot, George	"Armgarth" (P-in-verse)	1871?	Armgarth	1	1	singer	2,1+,6	3	3,5
	Daniel Deronda (N)	1876	Mirah Lapidoth Alcharisi	3 4	3 1	singer singer	5,1 6	4 3	3,6
Schreiner, Olive	The Story of an African Farm (N)	an1883	Lyndall	2	4	potential playwright	6	3	3
Caird, Mona	The Daughters of Danaus (N)	1894	Hadria Fullerton Temperley	1	1	pianist-composer	1+,6	3	1,2,3
Chopin, Kate	"The Awakening" (SS)	"1895?	Edna Pontellier	1	3	painter	4,6	3,5	3
Cather, Willa	"A Wagner Matinee" (SS)	1905	Aunt Georgiana	1	1	pianist		3	4
	"Flavia and her Artists" (SS)	1905	Jemima Broadwood Frau Lichtenfeld	3 4	3 3	actress novelist			
Mansfield, Katherine	"The Modern Soul" (SS)	1911	Fraulein Sonia	1	1	actress	5,2		
Austin, Mary	A Woman of Genius (N)	1912	Olivia Lattimore Cecilia Brune Jess Darcy	1 3 4	1 1 1	actress actress singer	6,1+,5	3,7,2	3,1
Cather, Willa	The Song of the Lark (N)	1915	Thea Kronborg	1	1	pianist-singer	1+,6	6	3



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Macaulay, Rose	<u>The Noncombatants and Others</u> (N)	1916	Alix Sandomir	1	3	painter		
Dane, Clemance (Winnifred Ashton)	<u>Legend</u> (N)	1919	Madala Grey Lila Howe Beryl Baxter	1 4 4	1 4 4	novelist novelist writer	4	1,4,5
Macaulay, Rose	<u>Potterism</u> (N)	1920	Leila Yorke (pseud.) Jane Potter	2 3	1 3	popular novelist novelist	4	
Cather, Willa	"Coming Aphrodite" (SS)	1900	Eden Bower	2	3	singer	1	
	"The Diamond Mine" (SS)	1920	Cressida Garnet	1	2	singer	1,2	1,5
	"A Gold Slipper" (SS)	1920	Kitty Ayrshire	2	2	singer	2,1+	
	"Scandal" (SS)	1920	Kitty Ayrshire	1	2	singer	2	5
Mansfield, Katherine	"Psychology" (SS)	1920	nameless woman	2	3	playwright		
	"Pictures" (SS)	1920	Ada Moss	1	1	singer	5	7
West, Rebecca	<u>Harriet Hume</u> (N)	1929	Harriet Hume	2	2	pianist	1	3



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Richardson, Henry Handel (Ethel Florence Richardson)	Maurice Guest (N)	1930	Miss Martin Euphemia Cayhill Madeleine Wade Avery Hill	4 3 3 4	2 3 2 2	singer violinist musician pianist	2 2 5,1 1+,5	1 1	
Undset, Sigrid	Jenny (N)	1930	Jenny Winge Francesca Jahrman	1 2	1 1	painter painter	1,4 1,4	3 2	1,5 4
Fitzgerald, Zelda	Save Me the Waltz (N)	1932	Alabama Beggs	1	3	dancer	4,1	1	
Stein, Gertrude	The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas (N)	1933	Gertrude Stein	1	1	writer	1		
McCullers, Carson	The Heart is a Lonely Hunter (N)	1940	Mick Kelly	2	1	pianist	1		
Porter, Katherine Anne	Ship of Fools (N)	1945	Jenny Brown	3	1	painter	1,5	1	
Welty, Eudora	"June Recital" (SS)	1949	Miss Eckhart Virgie Rainey	3 3	1 1	pianist pianist (potential)	5,4,1	7	
McCullers, Carson	"The Wunder-kind" (SS)	1951	Frances	1	1	pianist	1-		





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McCullers, Carson	"Madame Zilensky and the King of Finland" (SS)	1951	Madame Zilensky	1	3	composer			
Colette	<u>The Vagabond</u> (N)	1954	Rene Nere	1	3	former writer; dancer	5,4	1,3	3
Murdoch, Iris	<u>The Sandcastle</u> (N)	1957	Rain Carter	2	1	painter	1	5	3
West, Rebecca	<u>The Fountain</u> 1957 <u>Overflows</u> (N)		Mary	2	1	pianist-composer	1+,5		3
			Rose	2	1	pianist	1,5		3
			Cordelia	2	1	violinist	2,1-,5		
Johnson, Pamela Hansford	<u>The Unspeakable Skipton</u> (N) 1959 <u>Night and Silence: Who is There?</u> (N)1962 <u>Cork Street, Next to the Hatters</u> (N)1965		Dotty Merlin Pringle Milton	2 3	1 3	poet novelist	1-,2,3,7	5	
Lessing, Doris	<u>The Golden Notebook</u> (N)	1962	Anna Wulf	1	1	novelist	4,3,1		5
Spark, Muriel	<u>The Public Image</u> (N)	1968	Annabel Christopher	1	1	movie star	2		1



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Johnson, Pamela Hansford	Catherine Carter (N) <u>Carter</u>	1968	Catherine Carter Isabel Tressall Michael de Foe (pseud.)	2 4 4	1 1 1	actress actress playwright(s)	1+,2	1,2

















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